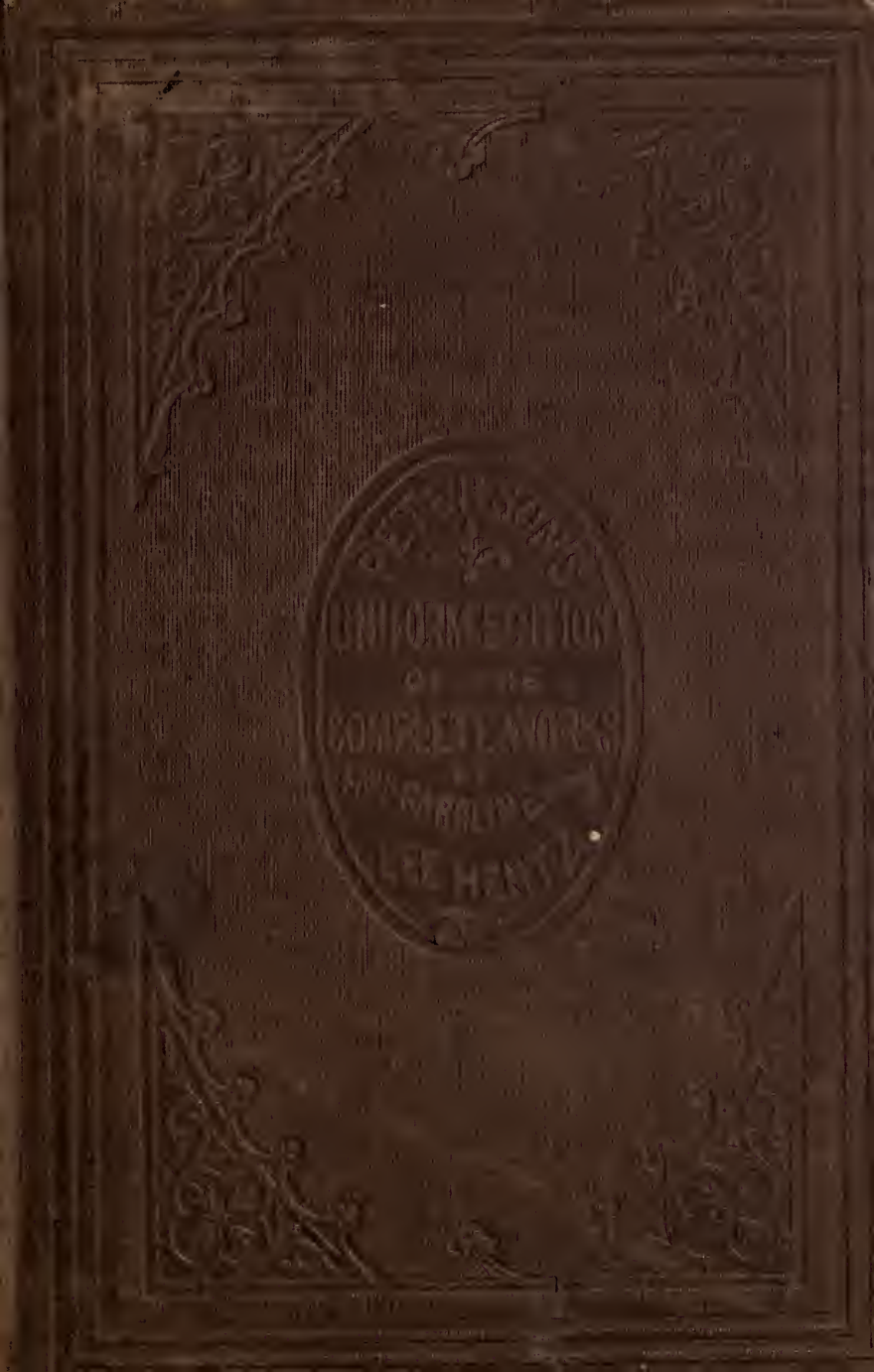

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Annie Lewis

MARCUS WARLAND;

OR,

THE LONG MOSS SPRING;

A Tale of the South.

BY

MRS. CAROLINE LEE HENTZ.

AUTHOR OF "COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE," "PLANTER'S NORTHERN BRIDE," "LINDA," "EOLINE," "RENA," "LOVE AFTER MARRIAGE," ETC.

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No. 102 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia.

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MARCUS WARLAND;

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A Tale of the South.

BY MRS. CAROLINE LEE HENTZ.

AUTHOR OF "LINDA," "RENA," "COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE," "THE PLANTER'S NORTHERN BRIDE," "BANISHED SON," ETC.

"There beautiful and bright he stood—
As born to rule the storm;
A creature of heroic blood,
A proud, though child-like form."—*Hemans.*

"She had hair as deeply black
As the cloud of thunder;
She had brows so beautiful
And dark eyes flashing under.
Bright and witty Southern girl!
Beside a mountain's water,
I found her, whom a king himself
Would proudly call his daughter."—*Mary Howitt.*

Philadelphia:
T. B. PETERSON, NO. 102 CHESTNUT STREET.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1852, by
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in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, in and for the
Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

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ADDRESS TO THE READER.

It may be that those who dwell in Northern latitudes may believe that we have thrown too fair a colouring over our pictures of Southern life, and that we have attempted to palliate traits in themselves harsh and repulsive. Being a native of the North, and a dweller of the South, with affections strongly clinging to both of the beautiful divisions of our common country, we trust that we have brought to the task an unprejudiced mind, a truthful spirit, and an earnest and honest purpose.

It has been our destiny to be something of a wanderer, and to dwell in several of the Southern States, and we can say, in all truth and sincerity, that the view of the social institutions of the South presented in the following pages is what we ourselves have witnessed; and as no one will accuse us of having set down *aught in malice*, so we can assert we have in *nothing extenuated*. We believe, if the domestic manners of the South were more generally and thoroughly known at the North, the prejudices that have been gradually building up a wall of separation between these two divisions of our land would yield to the irresistible force of conviction.

The description of Mr. Bellamy's plantation is drawn from the *real*, not the *ideal*. The incident recorded of Mrs. Bellamy, of her endeavouring to rescue the mulatto girl from the flames at the risk of her own life, occurred during the last winter in our city. The lady who really performed the heroic and self-sacrificing deed is a friend of our own, and we saw her when her scarred and bandaged hands bore witness to her humanity and sufferings.

The chivalry of the sable pilot, and the disinterestedness and heroism of the lady whom he rescued, were exhibited, about a year since, on the waters of the Chattahoochee.

We have seen devotion and fidelity equal to Aunt Milly's, and the magnanimity of Hannibal has many a prototype among the dark sons of Africa.

Under circumstances of peculiar interest has this work been written. The perusal of its chapters, as they have been completed day after day, has beguiled the weary and painful hours of an invalid husband, whose suggestive mind has corresponded to the movements of our own: and when we have seen disease thus robbed of its sting, and confinement of its depressing influence, we have hoped the work might find its way to the couch of some other sufferer, and occasion even a temporary oblivion of anguish.

We have also had the privilege of reading the manuscript to some intelligent and literary friends; and when we recall the interest they have manifested in its pages, and the frank and hearty encouragement they have given us during its progress, we feel emboldened to hope, that the public will judge us as kindly, and do equal justice to the motives that actuated us.

CAROLINE LEE HENTZ.

Columbus, Georgia.

MARCUS WARLAND.

CHAPTER I.

"*There* beautiful and bright he stood—
As born to rule the storm;
A creature of heroic blood,
A proud, though child-like form."

HEMANS.

"HARK!" exclaimed Mr. Warland, rising from his chair and walking with an unsteady step to the door, which he opened with a shaking hand. "Hark! there is some one shouting from the opposite bank of the river. Light the lantern, Marcus. Quick, I say. What are you standing in that blast for? Give it to me, and not keep me waiting here all night."

Snatching the lantern from the hands of his son, he seized the tongs and tried to bring the glaring coal in contact with the wick; but though he blew his hot breath in strong gusts upon it, and produced a bright flame, his wavering hand was unable to carry it through the open door of the lantern. Setting down the tongs, or rather throwing them on the hearth, he swung the lantern back into the hands of his son, who immediately lighted it, closed the door, and took down his cap from the wall.

"What are you going to do with your cap, sir?" asked Mr. Warland.

"Going with you, sir," firmly, but respectfully, answered the boy.

"And what good are you going to do me, I want to know? The night is as dark as pitch, and the wind howling like a pack of wolves."

"That's the reason I want to go with you, sir. It is not the first time I have been out with you when it is dark as it is now?"

"True, true," said the father, rubbing his forehead with his hands, "but if Katy wakes she will be frightened at finding herself alone."

"She never wakes, father; and if she does, Aunt Milly will hear her from the kitchen, and come to her directly."

"Poor thing," cried the father, in a softer tone, looking down upon a pale-cheeked, dark-haired little girl of about eight years old, fast asleep in a low cot-bed, in the back part of the room. "Poor thing!" repeated he, stooping over and kissing her, "what has she ever done that she should be cursed too?"

"Father! they are shouting again, louder than ever," said the boy. "Hadn't we better start?"

"Yes—wait one moment." He opened the door of a small cupboard in the darkest corner of the apartment, and taking out a black bottle, began to pour a light-coloured fluid in a glass. He was just putting it to his lips, when Marcus stepped quickly up, and laying his hand on his arm, exclaimed—

"No, father, you must not drink that now. You cannot ferry the boat steadily if you do, and the wind is so strong."

"Let me alone, boy. What right have you to prevent me? Let me alone, I say."

"Please, father. It's wrong. You don't know what you are doing. You just now said *she* was cursed—you know you did—and yet you are going——Nay, father, you shall not drink that before you start."

The resolute boy snatched the glass from his father's hand, and dashed the contents in the fire. A sudden illuminating blaze flashed through the room, as suddenly producing a pale-blue flame, curling slenderly upward. Then darting through

the door, he waved his lantern in the air, and gave the peculiar halloo of the boatman to indicate to the waiting traveller that the ferry was about to cross the river. Mr. Warland, who would have wrestled with a man who endeavoured by mild means to deprive him of the burning beverage, by which he sought to stimulate his dulled and exhausted spirits, yielded to the bold will of a boy of ten, without daring to resist, and followed him, muttering, not loudly but deeply, out of the cabin. Marcus hoisted the lantern on a slight post that was elevated at the end of the boat, but so as not to interfere with the entrance of carriages, and seizing one pole, gave the other without speaking into his father's hand. The river had a strong, rapid current, so that they were obliged to go up the stream some distance before they were able to cross it. The lantern threw a red wake on the dark water, over which the boat glided heavily and sullenly, though now Mr. Warland emulated the vigorous strokes of the pole which was swayed by the youthful arm of his son. He did not speak, for he was angry and ashamed, yet with his anger and shame an exulting pride in his son was mingled. He was proud of the boy, who dared to control his brutal appetite, and save him momentarily from a yet deeper degradation. As he looked upon his slight figure thrown back, standing out in the glare of the lantern, while he pressed the pole with all his strength against the rushing water, and thought what he might have made of him, and what his probable destiny now was, he could not suppress a groan of remorse.

"You are tired, father," said Marcus. "But never mind," he added, in an encouraging tone, "we shall soon be over, and we don't have to tug as hard coming back."

One would have supposed that *he* was the elder and stronger of the two, to hear his inspiring tone.

"This is a sorry life we lead," said the father, speaking for the first time since the rebellious act of Marcus. "Obliged to be called out like a dog, in the darkest night and the roughest

winds, for anybody and everybody. I don't mind it in the daytime; but when the heavens scowl as black as they do now, and the water looks like ink beneath us, I feel as if I were on the gloomy Styx, on my way to the infernal regions."

"I like it better in the night, father. It is so much more exciting. I don't care how dark it is; we can turn the boat into a comet, and send out a long, red streamer, that looks grandly enough behind us. As for the wind, the stronger the better. I love to hear the river roar after us. It sounds like music to me. Hoorah! father, here we are, and here is a carriage waiting for us, sure enough."

The rough, grinding sound of the boat upon the gravelly bank, and a sudden jerk which almost threw Mr. Warland from his feet, but which Marcus stood without a vibration, gave notice to the occupants of the carriage that the ferry was ready for them to cross. The horses came slowly, and tightly reined, down the steep bank, and stepped with thundering hoofs on the wet planks of the boat, which pushed off the moment the wheels rolled from the sand. A gentleman and lady were in the carriage, and the lady leaned on the shoulder of the gentleman, as if feeble and weary. She was wrapped up daintily in rich shawls, and blankets were placed in the bottom of the carriage to cover her feet. There was a young black girl too on the front seat, but her dark outline was scarcely distinguishable amid the dark shadows of night. When the boat was about halfway over the river, the horses began to be restless and step backward and forward, much to the alarm of the lady. Lifting her languid head from her husband's shoulder, she insisted upon getting out of the carriage.

"There is no danger, Isabel," said her husband. "Keep quiet, and do not expose yourself to taking cold, by this needless alarm." But even while he was speaking the horses went back still farther, though the driver stood at their head, with a controlling arm. Forgetting her fatigue and debility, the lady jumped out, while her husband, finding it in vain to

reason with her, followed, and taking one of the blankets, threw it on the bottom of the boat for her to stand on, and gathered her shawls round her, which the strong winds were filling like the sails of a ship.

"Look, husband," she whispered, "look at that boy—what a beautiful face and figure he has!" Marcus was standing, with his right hand grasping the long pole, by which he was propelling the boat, while with his left he pushed back the locks that were blowing over his temples. The blaze of the lantern fell full upon him, and lighted him up with a pale glory, while the thick shadows all settled behind him, in a kind of rich, Rembrandt background. Though he had been recklessly, fearlessly exposed to the sun and wind, regardless of their bronzing influence, his cheek and brow were as fair as a girl's; and his fair hair too, long and curling, floated back from his forehead, with a wild grace and glossiness, as if it were born to sport with the river-breeze that so often wantoned with its profusion. His eyes were of a clear, deep, cerulean blue, with very dark lashes, and his finely-formed eyebrows were also of a much darker hue than his hair. His mouth, beautiful as the Apollo Belvidere's, had also the slightly scornful expression that curls the parted lip of the young divinity. He certainly was a very remarkable-looking boy for a ferryman's son, and the lady forgot her alarm while gazing upon him, and the gentleman his fears for the lady. *He* was struck with the mind, the spirit that breathed from that boyish face—*she* with the striking beauty of its lineaments—*both* with the contrast he presented to the rude occupation in which he was engaged. The boy caught their earnest gaze, and turning with a quick, deep blush, he again bent over the pole, which began to dip in a deeper, stronger current. When they reached the opposite bank, the lady and gentleman held a low conversation, and then the gentleman, turning courteously to Mr. Warland, asked him if he knew of any house of entertainment near, where they could pass the night,

as Mrs. Bellamy was very much fatigued, and unwilling to travel farther in the darkness.

"There is no house of entertainment at all," answered Mr. Warland, "within several miles of here, and no house within a mile. The roads are very bad, and there is a very steep hill to go up before you reach it."

"What shall I do?" exclaimed the lady, looking anxiously at the log cabin before them; "I cannot, I dare not travel farther to-night. Cannot this good man give us a bed?"

"I am very sorry, madam," replied Mr. Warland, with much more politeness of manner than they expected from a ferryman, "I cannot offer you any suitable accommodations. My cabin is too rough and ill-furnished to ask you to sit down in, much less to sleep in."

"I don't care for accommodations," she cried, earnestly. "No matter how rough the bed, how coarse the fare, I will not complain; but I cannot ride with these wild horses any farther this dark night."

"The horses are not wild, Isabel," said her husband, with a smile. "They are very safe and manageable; but I know you are a coward, and cannot help it. If this gentleman is willing to take us in for the night, I shall certainly be under obligations to him, for your sake."

"If I had a bed," stammered Mr. Warland, ashamed and vexed at his poverty, well knowing that it was the curse he had drawn upon himself, and that he too once eat the bread of affluence.

"Let us give them *our* bed, father," said Marcus in a low voice, approaching close to his father; "we can sleep upon the floor."

"I am sorry to put you to inconvenience, my fine boy," cried Mr. Bellamy; "but I thank you very much for your obliging offer. I know Mrs. Bellamy will not refuse it."

Marcus did not like to be called a "fine boy" by the rich man whom he was about to accommodate. It sounded too patronising. He did not mean that he should hear the offer.

He wanted his father to have the credit of it, if there *was* any credit in it, of which he was not at all convinced. He knew what was due to the stranger within one's gate, as well as the children of the wealthy; and there was something about the lady so sweet and winning, her slightest request seemed clothed with the absoluteness of a command. He led the way to the cabin, holding his lantern low so as to illumine the ground where the lady stepped. When they entered, there was certainly nothing very inviting in the aspect of those unlathed, unplastered walls, and poorly-furnished room, to the eye of the delicate and weary traveller; but it was a place of safety, and it was certainly preferable to the danger of bad roads, fiery horses, and a night of inky darkness. The only chairs that were visible were wooden frames, with untanned leather bottoms; and a low bedstead, covered with a blue and white woollen counterpane, looked hard and repulsive. Still there was an air of neatness, and even of comfort. There were curtains to the lower part of the windows, which, though made of white domestic, were perfectly neat, and the pillow-cases, and all of the sheets that were visible, were of snowy purity. Mrs. Bellamy sat down on the side of the bed, while the black girl brought in her blankets, and kneeling down, spread one beneath her feet on the unearpeted floor. Marcus thought the lady's feet must be very dainty things, since they were not allowed to press any thing harder than wool; and he thought, too, how many there were who would be thankful to have those soft, nice blankets to cover them, and shield their bodies from the cold. He threw some pine-knots on the dying embers of the hearth, which soon kindling, a flood of radiance went rolling all over the dark walls, converting them, for the time, into an illuminated dome. The beams overhead, being unfloored, the eye could travel upward to the apex of the roof, so that there was an illusion of loftiness given to the building, low and confined as it was. Mr. Bellamy, who had been with Mr. Warland, to arrange in

some way for the accommodation of his horses, now entered with the master of the house, and drawing a chair towards the fire, appeared to gladden in the influence of the cheering blaze. He was a fine, benevolent-looking man, with a kindness and heartiness of manner which even Mr. Warland could not resist. He seemed so well satisfied with the accommodations offered, so sorry for the trouble they were giving, it was impossible to grudge a hospitality so gratefully received, and so urgently required.

The magnificent fireworks in the chimney threw every object out in strong relief, and even suffused with a glow the fair, pale face of the weary lady, who, half reclining on the bed, supported by her elbow, suffered her eye to wander over the group around the fire, though it rested with increasing interest on the remarkable-looking boy, who stood beside her husband with the air of a young aristocrat, in spite of his common apparel. She looked from him to his father, on whose brow the unmistakeable seal of intemperance was stamped, that mark of sin and shame, which grows broader and deeper, till the image of God is utterly defaced. He might once have been a handsome man; for his forehead was lofty, and his features symmetrical; but his eyes had a pale, watery lustre, and his face was bloated and discoloured. He was now, however, perfectly sober, thanks to the bold interference of his dauntless boy before they left the cabin; and as he sat conversing with Mr. Bellamy, the latter was astonished at the ease and refinement of his language. By certain classic allusions, he soon discovered that he had had a collegiate education, and was a fine belles-lettres scholar; and he also learned that he had known some of the most distinguished men of the day; and yet he was located on the banks of that wild stream, in an obscure log-cabin, lonely and poor, a common ferryman, and he was bringing up his noble boy for the same inglorious occupation. These things troubled the benevolent Mr. Bellamy, and he longed to fathom their mystery.

In the mean time another figure was added to the group, and a very important one in the ferryman's cabin. It was Aunt Milly, the only negro that remained of the wreck of Mr. Warland's fallen fortunes, which she endeavoured to retrieve in the dignity of her single person. She had a great deal of family pride, and notwithstanding the low condition to which her master was reduced, she remembered his former station in society, and in the presence of strangers treated him with marked deference and respect, as if, by clothing him in her imagination with the light of other days, she could cause others to forget his present altered and degraded situation. She had been the nurse of his children, and for two or three years had watched over their desolate and orphan childhood, with the tenderness and devotion of a mother. When Mrs. Warland was on her deathbed, where a broken heart had laid her, she bound her husband, then awakened to a remorseful consciousness of the fatal consequences of his degeneracy, by a solemn promise, never to part with this faithful and attached creature.

"All the rest are gone," said the dying mother—"all sold, scattered, and broken up—Milly alone remains; she loves my poor children, and will be a mother to them when I am gone. Promise me, as you hope for comfort and pardon in *your* last moments, never to give up this their last friend, their only stay."

Mr. Warland, in an agony of remorse, promised all she required, and the faithful slave declared they should spill every drop of her heart's blood, sooner than separate her from the children she loved better than her own soul. From that moment she devoted herself to their interests with a fidelity that never wavered, and an affection that never abated. There was no sacrifice too great for their comfort, or too mighty for her love. Let us not be accused of drawing an exaggerated picture of the sable race. "We speak what we do know —we testify to that which we have seen." It is not our intention to write a work in defence of the peculiar institution

of the South; but in delineating pictures of southern life, where the negro character occupies so conspicuous a place, and exercises so commanding an influence, we would draw from nature alone; we would not add one "shade the more, one ray the less," to purchase an immortality of fame. Truth alone is our object, and truth is *omnipotent*, and must and will prevail. We do not enter into the bold design of going back to the time when our forefathers forfeited their claim to humanity, and purchased human blood. Neither do we dare sacrilegiously to question the wisdom of the Creator, nor attempt to fathom the mystery of His design in dyeing the negro's face with the hue of night, and giving to us the fairer tints of the morning. We speak of the children of those forefathers, who have received the inheritance as a part of their patrimony, and on whom the evil is entailed as a birthright. Slavery is not an outer garment, that can be thrown off at will, when it becomes oppressive to the wearer; it is a *thread*, woven into the woof and warp of the web of their existence; and the stroke that separates it must cut the heart-strings of the owner. It is a dark thread; but as it winds along, it gleams with bright and silvery lustre, and some of the most beautiful lights and shades of the texture are owing to the blending of these sable filaments. We hope this digression will be pardoned, and its motive be understood. In these times of national excitement, when the stars of the Union, that have so long moved harmoniously in their appointed orbits, obeying the great laws of moral gravitation, seem ready to rush from their spheres,—and the azure firmament where the constellation has blazed, torn by dissension and scorched by the fires of passion, threatened to be rolled together as a scroll,—it becomes one and all to cast their mite in the treasury of truth. If they have but *one* ray of intellect, let it be sent abroad to assist in dissipating the clouds of error. If they have but an infant's strength, let it be exerted to sustain the endangered interests of our country's

union. Should we be accused of throwing too strong a light on our subject, let others bring forward the shade. We again repeat, we will produce no facts connected with this theme for which we cannot bring proofs "strong as Holy Writ." We hope Aunt Milly will forgive us for leaving her standing so long, with her hands folded over her clean, white apron, as on a comfortable little shelf, curtsying to the strange lady with respectful lowliness. A handkerchief of mingled orange and red was twisted round her retreating forehead, and another of the same blending hues was folded round her ebon neck. She had evidently prepared herself for the occasion, and looked as if she were conscious of bearing on her shoulders the tottering honours of the house of Warland. It must be acknowledged that Aunt Milly had one fault, that grew into a kind of monomania. In her desire to conceal the poverty to which her master was reduced, she indulged in a spirit of exaggeration, which increased upon her unconsciously. She actually began to believe *herself* in the existence of those resources which her imagination supplied, she had so often had recourse to them in the day of trouble.

Mrs. Bellamy felt nearly as much surprise to see this very respectable and stately-looking negro a member of the family, as the fair-haired boy she admired so much, and acknowledged her lowly greeting with a gentle curtsy, that took captive at once Aunt Milly's susceptible heart. The black girl, who was sitting on the soft blankets at her mistress's feet, looked up, with a bright exhibition of smiling ivory, on this noble manifestation of one of her own colour.

"What would mistress like for her supper?" asked Aunt Milly, rolling up her large eyeballs, as if endeavouring to recollect the many luxuries with which she could supply her. "The chickens would be too tough killed off all of a sudden so, or I could have some fried in batter, and there wouldn't be time for the muffins and egg-cake to rise; but e'enemost any thing else in the world that mistress would like, she shall

have, for the wanting. I haven't been head-cook in master's family these twelve years for nothing."

An arch smile fluttered over the rosy lips of Marcus at Aunt Milly's grandiloquent exhibition of hospitality, knowing what a poor supper she really would be obliged to prepare for the appetite of the travellers.

"Thank you," replied Mrs. Bellamy, "I will not trouble you for any thing but a cup of tea; we all have eaten quite lately in the carriage, and are not hungry in the least. You know travellers always carry their luncheons with them."

"Yes, mistress; bless your soul, yes," answered Aunt Milly, inexpressibly relieved; "when my poor dear mistress used to go a journeying, I allos stuffed the carriage-pockets full of all sorter nice goodies, to say nothing about the wine and cordials, and them kinder fixings. A bit of cold turkey and a slice of neat's tongue tastes mighty good when one's travelling; I knows all about it. Well, I'll go and draw a cup of gunpowder tea, and serve it up for you, mistress, with loaf sugar and cream."

It was not long before Aunt Milly reappeared with a waiter, from which the japan had partially disappeared, a cup of common white crockery, and a little blue bowl with brown sugar, instead of the white crystal she had promised to serve. Going up to Mrs. Bellamy with as much ceremony as if she were in a fashionable drawing-room, she apologized for every deficiency with a grace and readiness that left no room for doubt.

"I'm mighty sorry, mistress, and ashamed, too, to offer you this sort of sugar; but we've just this minute got out of the white. If you'd come any other day but this—it's really mortifying—and this common crockery aint fit for quality folks to use. But you know, mistress, when folks move, chiny and porceling breaks up so, it all turns to rack and ruin. We sold it all out, and the glass and silver too; and

this is such a sorter out-of-the-way place, and one see so little fine company, we don't mind about the 'ficiencies."

"Milly has mounted her hobby-horse, I see," said Mr. Warland, observing Mr. Bellamy and his wife exchange a benevolent smile while his *head-cook* was expatiating over her cup of black tea and brown sugar; "I must, however, do her the justice to say, that whatever may be her present position, she once was familiar with the luxuries of which she boasts."

"La, please, master," said Milly, casting a cunning look out of the corner of her eye, "I never boasts of myself, but I allos was proud of belonging to quality folks, and not to the no-account sort of people."

"Well; take away the waiter; don't you see the lady has put her cup back?"

Mrs. Bellamy tried to sip the beverage, so kindly prepared, but her utmost efforts only enabled her to get down a few swallows. Aunt Milly was distressed because "the cat had stolen the nice cream, that would have made it so good," and she was equally distressed "that the beautiful Meosselles counterpane was in the wash, and that the lady would have to sleep under that rough kivering."

Mrs. Bellamy assured her on that point, that it was of no consequence, as she only wished to recline on the outside of the bed, wrapped in her shawls, and be ready for a very early ride in the morning.

"But who is that little creature in the other bed?" said she, starting, for she had not observed before that it had an occupant. Now the firelight played lambently on little Katy's round, but colourless cheeks and dark hair, which lay loose upon the pillow.

"La, bless your heart, mistress, that's little Katy; it's my own blessed child, that I weaned and took right out of its mother's arms. And so I did young master, there; and since their own mother died, my poor, dear mistress, I haint lived for any thing else in the world but them children, and

I shall live for them, till the Lord pleases to take me home to my blessed husband, that's now in glory; the Lord have mercy on his soul."

Mrs. Bellamy was so much interested in the sleeping child that she walked across the room, and gazed on its infantine features, to the delight of the affectionate Milly.

"Oh! mistress," continued she, in the abundance of her affection, "them children's mighty near to me; if they were my own born and raised, I couldn't think more of 'em. When my Heavenly Master saw fit to take away my poor mistress from evil to come, she make me promise 'fore she die, never to leave or 'sake her little ones; and I never will, as long as one foot can trot after the other. No; as long as poor Milly has a mouthful of hoe-cake as big as a barley-corn," added she, forgetting her vain boasting in the pure reality of her affection, "she'll break it with them two blessed children."

Wiping a tear from her eye with the corner of her white starched apron, she stroked back the child's dishevelled hair, and smoothed the sheet carefully over the counterpane.

"They are both beautiful children," replied Mrs. Bellamy, looking from the placid face of the sleeper to the little ferryman near the fire. "How long is it since their mother died?"

"Just two years and six months next Sabbath evening at half-past eleven o'clock;" then lowering her voice so that her master and Mr. Bellamy, who were engaged in earnest conversation, could not hear her, "that was an awful night, it was; I never shall forget it in all my born days. I thought master would have gone 'stracted sure enough; he went raving about the room, and bunting his head 'gin every thing that come in his way, as if he wanted to split it right open; if it hadn't been for that trouble, he never 'd seen this sorter place. We couldn't stay there no more, so he sold every negro he had but me, and come off like St. Bartholomew in the wilderness, to live, as it were, on the locusses and wild honey."

The lady, though she was much interested in the history of the orphan children, and touched by the devotion of the faithful slave, felt very weary and anxious to resume her reclining position. The coloured girl was already fast asleep; and Marcus, wrapping himself in a blanket that Aunt Milly brought from the kitchen, soon slept as soundly as if lying on a bed of down. Mrs. Bellamy, overcome by fatigue, suffered her head to fall entirely back on the pillow, whose clean surface she did not shrink from pressing, and she also soon lost all consciousness of surrounding objects. Aunt Milly retired to the kitchen, rejoicing that she had not been obliged to commit the honour of the family, by getting a supper, which would have shamed her cookery and the former grandeur of their house. All slept but Mr. Bellamy and his host, who sat smoking their pipes and conversing with earnest interest by the light-wood blaze. Let it not be a matter of surprise that a gentleman of the fine appearance and elegant accompaniments of Mr. Bellamy should indulge in the luxury of a pipe. It is the badge of the southern planter, however lofty his rank, or abounding his wealth. When the shades of evening gather round him, and he draws near the genial hearth, he applies the live coal to the cup of his earthen pipe, and while the blue smoke curls in light wreaths above his head, filling the room with a warm and fragrant atmosphere, he luxuriates in the *dolce far niente* of existence. Or when a warmer season sends him abroad in the open air, he seats himself in the pillared piazza that surrounds his dwelling, and looking benevolently and placidly at the winking stars, he watches the gossamer-like vapour float among the tendrils of the vines that twine the column which supports his leaning chair. In the north, it is only the country labourer that cultivates this soothing art, and the farmer's wife who possesses any claim to gentle breeding would blush to have her husband seen with this calumet of peace at his lips. The high-bred southerner, like the calm, luxurious German, loves to see

the cares of the day evaporate with the incense of the weed, whose cultivation is a source of his wealth, and furnishes employment to a portion of his slaves.

"I am astonished," said Mr. Bellamy, continuing the conversation, now audible in the stillness of the apartment, "I am astonished that a man of your natural and cultivated powers of mind can settle down in this obscure spot, lost to mankind and lost to himself. Pardon me if I speak too plainly, but I cannot help it. A man is never lost while conscious of his degenerate condition. If not for your own sake, for the sake of your children, rouse yourself and be a man again. Why, this boy of yours is the finest child I ever saw in my life. To put *him* in a ferry-boat, and throw all his energies into that long pole he grasps with such a princely air, when by education he might be made such an ornament to the world, is a crime in the sight of God and man."

"Alas! what else can I do with him now? I have wasted the property that might have been his. I have forfeited the confidence and respect of society. I have made myself a by-word and a reproach among men. I came here that I might hide myself from every eye that knew me in the days that were mine, before the tempter found this burning plague-spot in my heart, and blew upon it with his breath of flame."

"You have but to make a solemn resolution never to taste another drop of the poison;—to do as thousands have done before you, and been saved," cried Mr. Bellamy, rapping the ashes from his pipe in an energetic manner. "You are still in the prime and vigour of your days. You can resume your station in society. You can give your children the blessings of civilized and social life."

"Look at this tremulous hand," said Mr. Warland, holding up the half-palsied member, "and see what a wreck my nervous system now is. I might have reformed years ago, but now it is too late. Every energy of body and mind is fast wasting away I cannot live without the excitement of drink. I must

drink to appease the gnawing of remorse—to drown the scorpions of avenging conscience:—drink to forget that I broke the heart of my wife, beggared my children, sold and scattered my poor slaves:—drink to forget that I have sold myself, body and soul, to the arch-tempter of mankind."

"Well, drink as much as you please, but let it be cold water—pure, crystal water from the spring. Promise me, if you have one remnant of manhood left, that you will not taste another drop of alcohol. If you will, I will do something for that boy of yours. If I had such a son, I would not take a million ingots of gold for him. He *must* be educated. How you can sit down and give yourself up to perdition, without one spark of pride for your children, or one feeling of respect for yourself, is astonishing—astounding—incomprehensible. By heaven, the maniac, chained to his dungeon walls, is a sane man to you!"

"I know it—I feel it," cried the wretched man, "but I've made so many resolutions and broken them all, I'm afraid to promise. I have tried—God knows I have—but it is all in vain. You think I don't love my children. I would throw myself into these flames this moment if it would do them any good. I would be torn into atoms by wild beasts to save them one pang. And yet"——

"You cannot give up the suicidal habit of drinking," interrupted Mr. Bellamy.

"Alas! no—some demon stands at my elbow and urges me on, though I know that every step brings me nearer to the burning billows of hell."

Here he leaned his head on his hand, and wept and sobbed in the impotence of unavailing remorse.

"God help you, poor man, and God help your poor children," exclaimed Mr. Bellamy, too much moved to remain still in his chair, and rising, he walked the room with troubled steps.

His heart yearned over the sleeping children, doomed to an orphanage more sad than that created by death itself. It

yearned too over the helpless man, who seemed wrapped in the tightening coils of a hydra, whose blood is gall, and whose breath is fire. He stopped at the side of the slumbering boy, on whose placid brow a heaven-born smile was lingering, as if it had been fanned by an angel's wing. "And this boy must live under this doom," cried he, bitterly. "Oh! miserable infatuation—unparalleled madness!"

"I *will* try once more," cried the weeping inebriate. "I *will* try for the sake of that boy and my poor, little, motherless Katy. I thank you for the interest you have taken in a doomed wretch. If I had known you a little sooner, I might perhaps have been saved. But friends looked coldly on me, neighbours passed by me on the other side—even my wife turned from me in loathing. Poor soul, she could not help it—no, she could not. I thought I was lost, and plunged deeper and deeper, trying to annihilate myself. But there is something *here* that is undying," cried he, smiting his breast with his hand. "There is a fire that is unquenchable. The word of God is true. Yea, let God be true, though every man be a liar."

"I shall be travelling this way again in about six months," said Mr. Bellamy, trying to speak calmly. "In the mean time, abstain from the poison that is consuming you, and if I then find you are trying to help yourself and family, I will see what I can do for you. I will get a respectable situation for yourself, and assist in the education of your children. But remember, it must be a *sober* man that I place in a responsible office. I cannot compromise my own reputation."

Mr. Warland renewed the oft-repeated and oft-broken promise of abstinence, with an earnest resolution of amendment; and Mr. Bellamy, gratified at obtaining this victory, and hoping he would have strength to keep his word inviolate, lay down on the couch, and fell into the calm slumbers of an untroubled bosom. Mr. Warland could not sleep. The stings of an awakened conscience and the terrible gnawings of un-

satisfied appetite would not let him rest. Crouching by the hearth, he gazed on the little cupboard which contained the fluid that had turned his blood to fire, and for which he was craving with insane, irresistible desire; then looking on the calm sleepers, he said to himself,—he might taste, and they would never know. His bold boy would not dash the glass again from his grasping hand; his new friend's admonishing voice was silent now. Stealing darkly towards the corner, he opened the door, and laid his hand upon the bottle.

"I have promised," he said, pausing and trembling, "the breath is not yet dry upon my lips—I have promised once again, and shall I break my oath this very night—this hour —this moment? Oh! merciful Father!" he exclaimed, sinking on his knees, and holding up his trembling arms towards heaven, "Holy Spirit, whom I have insulted and abjured, forsake me not in this my extremity. Give me strength to wrestle with my indwelling sin. Take away the curse from me and my children."

Jacob wrestled with the angel of his dream till the breaking day, and won the blessing for which he fought. Warland struggled with the demon of temptation. till morning light, and at last prevailed. How many more conflicts could he endure, and live?

Before the rising of the sun, all was life and bustle in the cabin. The travellers were anxious to commence their journey at the earliest possible hour, and Aunt Milly, finding that they were resolved to start before breakfast, and thus knowing that the *credit* of the family was safe, gave a glowing description of the luxuries that she had *intended* to place before them.

Little Katy gazed with surprise and alarm on the strange faces that met her waking eyes; but there was something so kind and reassuring in their countenances, she soon glided to the side of the lady, and even played with the rings that glittered on her snowy fingers. Mrs. Bellamy, who had no

children of her own, felt inexpressible tenderness for this motherless child, confided to the care of an evidently inebriate father, and a slave who, however faithful and affectionate, was incapacitated, by her darkened intellect, from bestowing that moral and mental culture her dawning years demanded. There was something peculiar in the face of Katy —peculiar for a child in any situation, but especially in hers. A pensive, even melancholy, expression, and a total absence of colour gave her a look of refinement, more interesting than mere rosy, joyous beauty. Her eyes were blue, of a darker hue than her brother's, but their lashes were of raven blackness, and her eyebrows and hair were exceedingly dark. Aunt Milly had arrayed her in her best frock and apron, and brushed her hair till it looked glossy as the wing of a bird: and when a child feels that she has her *best* dress on, no matter what that dress may be, whether the costliest silk or the cheapest calico, the association is the same, and all the self-respect which external circumstances can give her elevates her spirits. It was this consciousness of looking her best, that gave her confidence to caress Mrs. Bellamy's gem-decorated hand, and peep into her pale face with those eyes, that resembled the violet in colour and their natural bending towards the earth.

"You are a very sweet little girl," said the kind-hearted lady, putting her arm caressingly round her. "Whom do you love best?"

"Marcus and Aunt Milly, and father, too," answered the child.

"Marcus is very kind to you, is he not? He is a good brother, I know."

"Oh, yes, ma'am," replied Katy, with a fervour that changed the whole expression of her features; "he is *so* good!—you don't *know* how good he is. He saves all the money he gets, and puts it in a little box with a hole in the top, where it can't come out again, for me, when I get big enough to go to

school. I can read now; he taught me how himself, and reads books to me every night."

"Does *he* go to school, my child?"

"No, ma'am; but father teaches him. Father is a great scholar, and knows every thing. Brother Marcus can read Latin and Greek, too, and father says he will be a great man some time."

"But how does your brother earn money?" asked the lady, urged by a better motive than idle curiosity. They happened to be alone in the room at this moment, as all were busy in preparation for their departure.

"He catches fish, and sells them; and sometimes the gentlemen that cross in the boat give him money; and he makes little willow baskets at night, and Aunt Milly carries them way off and sells them for him. But you mustn't tell of that, please don't," added the child, lowering her voice. "He don't want it known, 'cause he says it's girl-work. I help him make them, too. Aunt Milly keeps the box for us, and puts a heap in it herself."

"And how does *she* earn money in a place like this, and what is she going to do with it? Help send you to school?"

"Yes, ma'am, that's what she does it for. She takes in washing and sewing; all she can get, though that aint much; we live so far off. Uncle Simon brings work to her."

"And who is Uncle Simon?"

"Don't you know Uncle Simon?" asked the child in an accent of astonishment. "He comes to see Aunt Milly, and he's *so* good. He's lame, and goes with a crutch; and he's old, too; and his master don't make him do much, but he does a heap for us, for all that."

"But your father, my dear child, your father puts money in your little box, too, does he not?"

"Father never has any money to put anywhere," replied little Katy, a shade of inexpressible melancholy stealing over her sweet countenance. "*He* spends it right off."

Mrs. Bellamy felt that she had arrived at a point where it would be sacrilege to go farther. The vices of a parent must be sacred ground to an innocent child, and never invaded by others, in their presence; but she knew little Katy must be aware of the appropriation of her father's money, and that, young as she was, she mourned over his degradation, and its awful consequences.

"I love father, because he loves *me*," said the child, fearful Mrs. Bellamy would think ill of him, because she had said he put no money in her little hoard.

"Will you tell your brother to come and see me a few moments before I go? I want to speak with him."

Away Katy flew, and soon returned, holding Marcus by the hand, whose face reflected the radiance of the rising day. He stood before her, his cap in his hand, and a modest blush glowing on his cheek.

"You were so very kind and considerate as to give up your bed and sleep on the hard floor," said Mrs. Bellamy, "I owe you some return; what can I do for you?"

"Nothing, ma'am. I am sure, I hope you don't think I did it in the thought of being paid. Besides, it's father's bed, not mine. If anybody is to be thanked, it's he, not I, ma'am."

It was very strange, but this rich and high-bred lady felt embarrassed at the thought of offering money to the son of the poor ferryman. She felt afraid of offending that innate nobility of soul, which gave such intelligence and spirit to his whole countenance. She had drawn an eagle from her purse, but hesitated in what manner to present it. At length she said, while a slight colour mantled her delicate cheek,—

"Your little sister tells me that you are very good to her, and are saving all your money for her use. Will you add this to her little store, and remember too that you have friends now who will always feel interested in your welfare?"

"Thank you, ma'am," said Marcus, receiving the golden coin with a bright blush, and bowing low as he took it from

that beautiful jewelled hand. "You have given it to *her*, and I must not refuse it. But we've done nothing to deserve it. It is all your gift, and a generous one, I'm sure."

"Don't you desire to go to school yourself?" asked Mrs. Bellamy. "You will not be contented to stay here and row a ferry-boat much longer. You ought not to be. You were made for something better. Have you no relations that can assist you?"

"Not that I know, ma'am. I do desire to go to school. I feel as if I *should* some day, but I could not leave my father now. He could not get along without me. He instructs me, too, when he is well enough." He paused with painful confusion, and then continued: "My father is an educated man, and takes great delight in giving me lessons when he has time. He has a good many books, which I love to read. See here, ma'am," said he, drawing aside a little calico curtain over the fireplace, and exhibiting several rows of classic volumes. "These are my treasures. We had a large library once, but these are all that are left. Contented!" repeated he, his lips curling with that peculiar curve she had admired so much the night before. "Oh! no, ma'am—don't think I am contented here."

"You ought not to be," said the lady, rising and folding her shawl more closely round her, for she heard the rumbling of the carriage wheels approaching the door. "You must think of me sometimes, and remember what I have said to you."

"Think of you!" exclaimed the boy, with fervid, enthusiastic gratitude. "Oh! madam, how could I ever forget you?"

The gentleness, kindness, and condescension of this beautiful lady opened a fount of sensibility in the young heart of Marcus that was never again sealed. She appeared in that rude cabin like an angel visitant, a messenger of mercy, bearing tidings from a fairer, purer world. He felt that *he* was of a kindred nature, that it was for such fellowship he was created, and he made a vow to himself that he would prove

worthy of the interest he had excited in her. He would strive, and toil, and struggle as never boy yet toiled and struggled, with an opposing destiny, till he had won back that position in society his father had forfeited; and perhaps, when his arm had the strength and his spirit the power of manhood, this fair, rich, and beautiful woman might possibly need *his* protection and aid. She might be riding in the darkness of night, and her carriage hurried to the brink of a precipice, and he rush forward and arrest the plunging horses; or she might be attacked by robbers, and his protecting arm shield her from their rapacity and rage. All this flashed through the brain of the high-reaching boy, and gave extraordinary animation to his countenance. The lady kissed the round cheek of Katy, and held out her hand to the boy in token of farewell; then yielding to an irresistible impulse, she bent down and kissed his forehead. Marcus felt as if his mother had come down from heaven, and breathed her balmy breath upon his brow. The grace, the tenderness of the action swelled his very soul. It was so long since he had felt such a dear caress. It hallowed him; it set him apart as something holy; it filled him with divine aspirations. Tears gushed like a fountain from his eyes, and, ashamed of his weakness, he darted through a back-door, and plunged into the thicket of pine trees that sheltered the cabin. Mrs. Bellamy turned to the opposite door with glistening eyes, where she encountered Aunt Milly, who had come to take an elaborate farewell.

She pressed in her hand a generous token of remembrance, which the negro, in her honest pride, was ashamed to receive.

"Oh! mistress, it's a shame, I'm sure, to take so much for just nothing at all. If it had been any other time, I could have served you up something nice and delicate. If you'd stayed to breakfast, and let me make some fricasee or quality dish for you, 'twould been different. Then the bed-kiver-was so ashamed—all the nice linen just washed and wrenched. But you'll 'scuse it, mistress, I know you will, for you are a

raal born lady, every inch of you; and the Lord bless and presarve you, and give you and good master too a merciful deliverance to your journey's end. May goodness and marcy follow you all the days of your life, and may you live hereafter in the big house the preachers built up yonder, without any hands or tools—etarnal in the heavens."

Aunt Milly had a habit of winding up her best speeches with quotations from Scripture, for the sake of effect, and though they were sometimes rather obscure, and perverted from their original meaning, they were not without point or expression.

"I respect you for your kindness to those children," said the lady, with a sweet smile. "Continue to be as kind and good to them, and God will reward you, Aunt Milly."

"Oh! mistress, you are so good—bless your sweet face. You look just like the seven seraphims that were cast out of the blessed Mary Magdalen—just like the sweet angel, that you are. I try to do my duty to them children, the Lord knows. It's all I lives and prays for."

Aunt Milly was now sobbing outright in the corner of her apron, for Mrs. Bellamy had touched the soft, porous part of her heart, that was always saturated with tears, which oozed out at the slightest pressure.

"Isabel, my dear," said Mr. Bellamy, taking her hand to lead her to the carriage, "we are all ready; the horses seem very gentle, so do not be alarmed."

"I do not fear by daylight, when you are near me," replied she, taking her seat on the crimson cushions that were gathered from all parts of the carriage around her. Mr. Bellamy shook hands with Mr. Warland, with whom he had just held another long and interesting conversation, and with a hearty "God bless you," took his place by the side of his wife.

"I feel quite out of my province in a carriage," said Mr. Bellamy, trying to settle himself in the midst of the bundles and carpet-bags, and the feet of the black girl on the opposite

seat. "Give me the back of the horse and the open air; but my wife *would* have my company, and I was obliged to obey. Drive on, Jerry, and remember whom you are carrying."

The carriage rolled along. Mr. Warland stood rooted to the spot where they left, all the remnant goodness of his nature roused to action by coming into collision with one so noble and generous. Aunt Milly gazed after them from the threshold with as much reverence as Abraham did after the departing angels who had sojourned in his tent; while little Katy raised herself on tiptoe to catch one more glimpse of the glittering wheels. But none gazed with the same intense feelings as swelled the heart of the boy who had sought the deep pine grove to hide his gushing tears. The child even then had a revelation of his destiny as a man. He believed that God had something great in store for him, and he was right.

CHAPTER II.

"Wo! wo! that aught so gentle and so young
Should thus be called to stand in the tempest's path,
And bear the token and the hue of death
On a bright soul so soon!—We are fallen
On dark and evil days."

"My boy's proud eye is on me, and the things
Which rush, in stormy darkness, through my soul
Shrink from his glance. I cannot answer *here*."

SIEGE OF VALENCIA.

IT was the beginning of winter when the travellers stopped at the ferryman's cabin, and long after their departure a wake of brightness seemed reflected on the stream of his existence. He had been strengthened to keep the solemn promise by which he had bound himself, and he already walked with a firmer tread and more elevated bearing. At night, by the

blaze of the pine-wood knot, he sat down by the hearth-side, while Marcus conned his classic lessons, or read the historic page, and Katy, cradled in his arms, seemed to infuse into his heart the purity and tranquillity of her own. The shout of the traveller was often heard, borne across the river by the breeze of night, but no one like the generous Bellamy and his sweet-faced wife came to gladden their dwelling.

"He said he would return in about six months," said he to himself, while apparently absorbed in the contents of a book. "More than two have already passed. Shall I hold out to the end, and be saved? Yes!—if there is truth or strength in human resolution, I will. I feel like a regenerated being. I can meet the clear glance of my boy without quailing. I can press the rosy lips of my darling without fear of scorching them with my fiery breath. I can look up to heaven, and ask the blessing of my God, confident that I am in the path of duty, and that His hand will guide me, and His rod sustain me. Yes! I feel there is hope even for me."

Marcus studied with an enthusiasm he had never manifested before. The words of the beautiful lady were ever thrilling his memory and inciting him to new exertions. Then, his father's regeneration, with what joy and gratitude did it inspire him! It is true, he had abstained before, and again relapsed; but it seemed impossible now that he ever would sink again into the abyss of shame from which he had emerged. Never since he had dwelt in that little cabin, had he felt so happy in the present, so hopeful of the future. A new source of enjoyment was also opened to him. As a reward for his extraordinary progress in the classics, his father had allowed him to commence the reading of Shakspeare, which was one of the rich gems saved from the general wreck. The boy felt as if he were in the midst of the glories of a new creation. It seemed to him that he was an instrument with ten thousand keys which the mighty Master of the human heart was touching at his will, waking the thundering notes of passion or the mellow

strains of tenderness and love. Boy as he was, he felt he knew them all; and in every lovely heroine he traced a similitude to his beautiful benefactress. He thought not, or cared not, that she was older than these divine ideals. He clothed the young and impassioned Juliet with her pale and spiritual loveliness; the tender Cordelia with her matchless grace; and in imagination the gentle Desdemona spoke in her silver accents. Little did Mrs. Bellamy imagine the deep worship she had inspired, the romantic reverential devotion pledged to her cause by this youthful devotee. She was henceforth to him the Star of the East, that was to lead him onward to glory and happiness. But Marcus had too much to accomplish, too great an object before him, to indulge too long in these ideal pleasures, whatever their fascinations might be. He would start up with a desperate resolution, shut the book, run into the kitchen where Uncle Simon and Aunt Milly were chatting cosily together, and seizing the bundle of osiers Uncle Simon was sure to have ready for him, would either sit down a while by these two faithful friends, while his fingers wove the smooth, white withes together, or return to the cabin, and snatching up his book, lay it open on the table, glancing furtively at the page, and taking in a glimpse of poetic beauty, while he braided the flexible willows, and shaped the growing basket. As Katy had told Mrs. Bellamy, he did not like to have it known that he employed himself in this manner, because he thought it an unmanly occupation; but as Aunt Milly disposed of them for him, he was not ashamed of working at home in this manner for the holy purpose for which he intended to devote his gains. Uncle Simon, the lame negro, whom Katy held in such veneration, was a constant visitor at the cabin, and vied with Milly in devotion to these interesting little children. He was nearly an exempt in consequence of his age and lameness, and had the greatest part of his time at his own disposal. Aunt Milly washed and mended his clothes for him, and, in return, he was always bringing some acceptable

offering to her and the children. Milly was never weary of describing to him the ancient honours of their house, and he, considered quite an oracle in his tribe, gave her long lessons of morality, and explained the Scriptures with unwearied zeal. They were neither of them idle while enjoying these social pleasures. She plied the needle as if her life depended upon her completing her task, and he either braided mats, made brooms by peeling down the smooth oak or hickory sticks, or prepared the osiers for "blessed young master."

Simon's hair was all grizzled, and it crisped round his black, wrinkled face, making a gray shade, like a crown of ashes on a lump of shining charcoal. The white of his eyes had a yellow tinge, and a sallow hue had also stolen over the once dazzling ivory of his teeth. He was naturally tall and broad-shouldered, but in consequence of his lameness was drawn on one side, and the muscles on one side of his neck were considerably contracted. He took great pains with his dress when he came to see Aunt Milly, who kept his shirts as white as the unsunned snow. On Sundays he wore an obsolete uniform coat, which had been given him years ago by his old master, who was a militia colonel. Then, the military grandeur of his attire, united with his crutch, gave him a similitude to a faded warrior; but all the battles he ever fought were in the church militant, of which he was the most celebrated champion of all his tribe who dwelt near the eastern shores of the rushing Chattahoochee.

"Now, young master," said Simon, when Marcus, with his soul still echoing to the sounding strains of the bard of Avon, was flying out of the kitchen, with his arms entwined with osiers; "please set down and talk a little to old Simon. That's right—that's a cleber master. Milly and I have been a argufying Scripter, and she says it's one thing, and I says another. We wants you to set us right. I oughts to know best, since I've been a preacher, as I may say, sence I could tell a sweet potater from a cabbage-stalk; but never mind, the

wimmen allers thinks *they* knows best, master Marcus; you'll find that out bimeby—yah, yah."

When Simon laughed, Milly always laughed too, out of politeness; and this was a great charm in her manners, in his estimation.

"You have not told me the question, Uncle Simon. How can I tell which is right, till I know the subject of dispute?"

"Now this it is, young master. Please listen, while I puts down the argument. I haven't been preaching all this time for nothing. Now *I* says that Abram offered up Isaac. You know Abram was a mighty great parsonage, and the Lord used to come and talk with him just as I talks to you, sorter familiar like. Now the Lord, says he to Abram, 'You go and take Isaac'—*Isaac*, mark ye, master—'and go right up to Maria'—(I allers did think that a mighty strange way to call a mountain)—'and pick up a heap of wood as you go along, and make a burnt-off'ring of the boy.' Now Milly, says she, it was *Isaac* that had to burn up Abram; and when I tells her it's no sich thing, she says it makes no difference, no way—it's just as the Lord pleases."

"Well, what difference upon airth does it make?" said Aunt Milly, giving a triumphant wink to Marcus. "Here is a hoe-cake, isn't there?"

"Yes, to be sure there is."

"Well, if *you* eats it, it's gone—and if *I* eats it, it's gone. It makes no sort of difference—it's gone, any way. Now I want to know if it isn't jist the same about Abram and Isaac. If Abram offered up Isaac, he was gone; and if Isaac burnt up Abram, he was gone. It's just as the Lord pleased."

And Aunt Milly nodded her head, and drew out a long needle of thread, as if her argument were overwhelming and unanswerable.

"I will get my Bible, Aunt Milly, and read you the history of Abraham and Isaac, and then you will see which was right."

Marcus brought his Bible, and sitting down between the two sable disputants, like the moonbeam severing a midnight

cloud, he read, with a clear, melodious voice, the beautiful story of the commanded sacrifice and the angelic interposition. Milly dropped her work, and leaned on her right elbow to listen, and Simon laid down his braided shucks and leaned on his left arm towards the youthful reader. The whitish, crispy wool of the old cripple almost touched the glistening locks of Marcus, and both pair of large, dilated eyeballs were drawn to a focus on the boy's beaming countenance.

"Jist listen—bless his heart—what a preacher he would make!" exclaimed Simon, giving Aunt Milly an emphatic nudge; "and you sees I am right, too—I knew I was. The Lord forgive your pervarseness."

"I never disputes the good book when I hears it, Simon; and I allows I *was* mistaken this time; but it might have been one as well as t'other, that's all."

"Now I jist wants to convince you of one thing," continued the persevering Simon, "that it *does* make a heap of difference what person is meant. Suppose I puts my foot in the fire—*you* don't feel it, does you?"

"No, to be sure I dosn't."

"Well, if *you* puts yourn in, *I* don't feel it. Then you see that proves the difference; so there's no use of argufying no more."

"No more there aint, Simon," said Milly, anxious to change the subject, as she was conscious he had won the victory, and exulted in her defeat.

It may be that the forensic disputations of our sable logicians were as lucid, and their subject as important, as some of our fairer and more learned brethren's. The negro certainly takes great pride in argument, particularly on religious subjects; and intrenching himself behind the bulwark of his faith, he clings to his preconceived opinions with a firmness and pertinacity which in ancient days would have won him the blazing crown of martyrdom. His religion, blended, as it is, with the most intense superstition, sometimes gives a tone of sublimity to his thoughts, in the midst of the most ludi-

crous associations. He sees the ghost flitting through the midnight shades of the dark pine woods, and hears the wailing of the lost spirit in the notes of the melancholy whippoorwill, and the hooting of the solemn owl. There is an African mythology as well as a Grecian and pagan one, and the negro's night is peopled by shapes which would puzzle the most ingenious statuary to fashion, or the most inventive artist to delineate.

Winter glided away peacefully and monotonously at the ferryman's cabin, and the gentle, almost imperceptible approach of a southern spring was felt rather than seen. The turbid waters looked clearer and bluer, the holly-trees had a brighter, deeper green, and the music of birds began to vocalize the lonely margin of the waters.

Mr. Warland, confident in his own strength, looked for the return of Mr. Bellamy with great impatience. He was very weary of his present mode of existence, and panted for a more congenial field of action. He had remained completely domesticated during the winter months, and out of the reach of temptation; for he poured out every drop of alcohol left in his possession, and ground the bottle to powder, that he might annihilate even the home of his enemy.

There was to be a kind of political meeting, a few miles distant, which he was anxious to attend. Marcus saw the preparations for his departure with foreboding heart. Never had he returned from such a gathering without a reeling step and a cursing lip. It was always the commencement of a long season of inebriation. Marcus longed to warn him of his danger, and entreat him to keep out of the way of temptation and sin. But this would seem such an insult to his father's character, he could not frame the words that trembled on his lips. They were written legibly, however, in his earnest eyes, and Mr. Warland answered as if they had been spoken.

"Fear not, my son; your father will not disgrace himself again. He has profited by the bitter lessons of experience,

and can say to the tempter, with unhesitating voice, 'Avaunt! carry your baffled arts elsewhere.'"

Marcus tried to smile and shake off the depression that hung heavy on his mind. He was quite a Nimrod in the woods, and taking his gun and pouch, and mounting a pony that Uncle Simon had left for his use, followed by his bounding dog, he soon forgot his sad forebodings in the excitement of hunting. Often had he seen the track of the flying deer; he had even caught a glimpse of their branching antlers through the swaying boughs; but never had he brought the noble animal at bay, or carried home a saddle of venison to the exulting Milly. But this day he actually won the crown of glory. He killed a beautiful deer with his own hand, and bathed his knife in the life-blood of its panting heart. As the victim turned upon him its wild, wistful, dying eyes, ere they closed for ever, the triumphant boy felt a pang of unutterable remorse dart through his heart. The dripping knife fell from his hand, and a mist darkened his vision. He felt that he was a cruel murderer, and would have given the best blood of his own heart to have restored life to the stiffening limbs of the bleeding animal. Then he remembered what a trophy it was, how much money it would add to his slowly increasing store, how Aunt Milly would praise his exploit, and little Katy's blue eyes dance with rapture, when she saw him bearing it homeward, swung in triumph across his pony, its antlers adorned with the holly's shining leaves. All the honours he anticipated awaited his return, and he watched his father's coming with redoubled anxiety, that he might inform him of his unlooked-for achievement.

"Don't leave your gun here, brother," said little Katy, as he leaned it against the wall in a corner of the cabin, "I'm afraid of it."

"But you must not touch it, or go near it, and then there is no danger. There is a load in it that I do not wish to waste, as I intend to go out again to-morrow. Aunt Milly, you must have a dish of smoking venison prepared for father's

supper; we will have one noble meal, and sell the rest, skin and all. I'll keep the antlers, however, to adorn the door of our cabin, and to let people know a descendant of the mighty Assyrian hunter dwells beneath this roof."

Marcus must be pardoned a little boasting. For a boy of ten the capture of the deer is an *ultima Thule* of ambition, and whatever after victories life may offer, no laurels glow with a brighter lustre than those won in the wild green wood.

"I wish father would come," exclaimed Katy, when the night grew dark, and the children drew near the hearth where the venison exhaled its savoury odours. Though the spring-time of the year diffused a mid-day glow, the chill night-air required the warmth of a fire, and the light-wood knot was the only lamp that illumined their dwelling.

"I wish he would, indeed," cried Marcus, the glow of success fading away in the chill of apprehension. He stood at the door looking, with his hand over his brow, into the thickening shadows.

"Never mind, young master," said Milly, pitying the hungry Katy, "you can eat your supper, and I'll keep ole master's hot at the fire, and serve it up for him when he come back."

Katy rejoiced in this arrangement, but Marcus could not eat. A sense of coming evil produced that sickness of the soul, a thousand times more deadly than physical disease. He was as sure that his father would return shorn of his regenerated manhood, as if he saw him staggering over the threshold. He came at last, just as his son's prophetic eye had beheld him, reeling into the room, followed by a rough-looking stranger, who came in with his hat on, and took a seat by the fire, with the confidence of a welcome guest. Marcus gazed upon his father with a look such as a child of light might cast upon fallen humanity, then turned inquiringly towards the dark-bearded and forbidding looking stranger.

"What are you staring at me so for?" muttered Warland, pushing his chair back at the imminent risk of falling out of it. "Call Milly, and let's have some supper."

"Marcus has killed a deer," cried little Katy, eager to announce the astounding tidings. "Only think, Marcus has killed a deer, father."

We will not sully the paper by recording the oath that fell from Warland's lips, and seemed to blister Katy's spotless cheek, for she turned away shrinking, like a young mimosa, and drew nearer Aunt Milly, who was placing the venison and corn-bread on the table, with a clouded brow. She mourned for the renewed degradation of *their house*, and for the fresh sorrows of her darling children. She was unaware of the evil impending over herself.

"Is this the woman?" asked the stranger, measuring her from head to foot with a bold, calculating glance.

"Yes," replied Warland, "but wait a while—the children."

"I tell you I'm in a hurry," said the man, "and must be off directly. Look round here, nigger, and tell us how old you are."

"It's none of your business," said Milly, rolling her eyes portentously at him, a faint glimpse of his purpose dawning on her understanding.

"I shall teach you better manners, I promise you," said the man, giving a whizzing motion to the whip he carried in his right hand, and which he had been trailing idly on the floor.

"When you're *my* master, you may," said Milly, with a scornful toss of her turbaned brows.

"I'm your master now, if I choose to take you, so none of your airs to me." Then turning to Warland, who was cowering before the flashing eye of Marcus, he added, "I'll keep to the bargain, and give you what we agreed. If I find you've deceived me, however, and she proves unsound, or lazy, or unmanageable, I'll not pay you one cent."

"Father," exclaimed Marcus, coming between him and the man, directly in front of Aunt Milly, in whose veins the burning blood of Africa was boiling with indignation; "father, you are not going to sell Aunt Milly—you cannot—you dare not do it."

"Why can't I?" cried the perjured wretch, quailing before the bright rebuking glance that seemed to scorch his brow, "She belongs to me, and I've a right to do what I please with her."

"You haven't the right," cried the undaunted boy, "you are perjured if you do it, in the sight of God and men. You promised my mother on her death-bed that you never would part her from us. You told her, if you ever did, that you prayed God would destroy you, body and soul. Oh! my father; think what you are doing. Oh, you don't know what you *are* doing; you are not yourself; I feared it would be so. If you had only stayed at home!" Marcus could not go on; a suffocating sense of shame and dishonour reflected from the author of his being, smothered his voice. Then Aunt Milly's imprisoned wrath found vent. Pressing closer to her, the pale and trembling Katy, who had sprung into her arms and pillowed her white cheek on the sable bosom that had fostered her with all a mother's tenderness, her eyes, burning like ignited charcoal, flashed from her master to the insolent stranger, and back again, their zigzag lightning.

"I told my mistress," said she, panting at every breath, "I told her they should take every drop of my heart's blood 'fore they took me from these children, and they shall. If master is a mind to parjure his soul, and fly right in the face of the Lord Almighty on the back of the evil sarpent, I'm not going to do it, not I. That's right, honey; hold tight to old Milly, she'll never let go on you long as she breathe the breath of life. Stand up, young master, they can't hurt you; the hairs of your head is all counted. The Lord that 'livered Moses out of the lion's foornace will keep you from the snare of Satan, and the prongs of the wicked ones."

The man, who seemed to admire this exhibition of spirit, as a proof of the physical power and energy of the slave he was about to purchase, laughed deridingly, and told her to come down off her stilts, and be ready to march.

"Sir," said Marcus, feeling his strength insufficient to

wrestle with this tall, strong man, in defence of Milly, and determined to appeal to his better feelings, "you cannot wish to take from us our only servant. We have no mother, and my little sister would die of grief, if you deprive her of her nurse. She will have no one to take care of her. There are plenty of negroes to buy, who can be better spared, if you must traffic in human blood. Leave us our only one, the last of all we've had."

The man seemed moved by this appeal, and might have been softened, had it not been for the boy's reproach upon his heartless trade. Angry thus to be rebuked by a mere stripling, a child, he assumed a rougher demeanour, and declared, with a blistering oath, that he would not be browbeat by children, and that the creature should tramp with him directly. He raised his whip in a threatening manner, as if he would intimidate the fair-haired boy who dared to cross his path with such unprecedented boldness.

With the bound of the young deer, whose antlered head he had so lately laid low, Marcus sprang to the corner where his gun was leaning, seized it, and leaping back in front of Milly, levelled it at the breast of the stranger.

"Touch her if you dare," said he, in a commanding tone; "lay one finger on her, and I'll stretch you dead at my feet."

The slight form of the boy seemed to tower and dilate with the energy of his passion, and the darkening iris of his eyes looked black as jet, and scintillated with living sparks. The drunken father, roused by this splendid exhibition of juvenile power, came staggering towards him. "Don't kill him, Marcus—I'll give it up—you see how it is, sir"—he stammered, catching hold of the back of a chair for support. Marcus still stood, moveless as a statue, his eye fixed, his weapon pointed at the breast of the man.

"Oh, blessed young master!" cried Milly, fully believing he had turned into something more than human; "you mustn't commit murder to save a poor creature like me. I wouldn't have a drop of blood spilled on your white soul. to

save myself from pardition. Let him take me, an he will; but I vow 'fore my heavenly Master, I'll never eat nor drink one morsel more as long as I live, but jist starve out and out; and I give him joy for the work he'll git out o' me."

"Put up your gun, young bloodhound," said the man, who had visibly turned pale, under the shade of his shaggy brows, "and keep your old nigger, if you want her. The next time I make a bargain with a drunken man, I'll know what I'm about. Look here, sir, you had better take care of yourself. If you ever make such a fool of me again—do you hear?—I'll blow your brains out."

With long strides and muttering threats he cleared the cabin, slamming the door after him, so that every plank of the floor vibrated from the concussion. There was silence for a few moments, first broken by the loud sobs of Milly, mingled with the gentler moans of the almost heart-broken little Katy. Marcus went to the door, and, stepping out, shot off the rifle in the air. The echoes went rattling across the river, and fell like rocks on the opposite side.

"What did you do that for?" asked his father, sullenly, "haven't you made noise enough yet?"

"I'll tell you what I did it for," answered the boy, with a face as pallid as marble, and an eye glittering like steel. "I was afraid I should kill you, father, and myself too; yes, I was. I never felt as I did just now. Feel my hands, Aunt Milly; are they not cold as ice? and yet I seem turned to fire. I wish we were all dead, Katy and Aunt Milly, and I too. *You* may live, if you want to, father, for you ought to be afraid to die. You have broken your promise to Mr. Bellamy; you have broken your promise to my dead mother; you have broken your promise to God; yes, *you* ought to be afraid to die."

Here Marcus, who was excited to a transient delirium by the events of the evening, pressed his hands on his forehead and uttered a cry of pain. Aunt Milly caught him in her arms, and as she did so the soft cheek of little Katy pressed against his own. That gentle, velvet pressure seemed to melt

the metallic band that was bound round his brain. He put his arms round these beloved friends, all he had in the world, and burst into tears. The image of the beautiful Mrs. Bellamy rose before him, even in that dark moment, but she seemed a star shining in a lone and distant glory, too far for him to feel its lustre. His father had fallen lower than ever, and there was a barrier shutting him from all the good and pure. In the sudden destruction of his long cherished hopes, he felt as if he were himself annihilated, and all his bright future blackened and laid waste.

"Yes," repeated he, as he pressed his little sister closer and closer to his aching bosom, "it would be better that we were dead and laid in our mother's grave, than live such a life of shame and sorrow as lies before us."

CHAPTER III.

"The water! the water!
Where I have shed salt tears;
In loneliness and friendliness,
A thing of tender years.
The water! the water!
How bless'd to me thou art,
Thus sounding in life's solitude
The music of my heart,
And filling it, despite of sadness,
With dreamings of departed gladness."

MOTHERWELL.

MARCUS sat beside the *Long Moss Spring*, the morning sunbeams glancing through the broad leaves of the magnolia and the brilliant foliage of the holly, and playing on his golden hair. He held in his hand a fishing-rod, whose long line floated on the water; and though his eye was fixed on the buoyant cork, there was no hope or excitement in its gaze. His face was pale, and wore a severe expression, very different from the usual joyousness and thoughtlessness of childhood. Even when the silvery trout and shining perch, lured by the bait, hung quivering on the hook, and were thrown, fluttering like

wounded birds through the air, to fall panting, then pulseless, at his side, he showed no consciousness of success, no elation at the number of his scaly victims. Tears, even large and slowly gathering tears, rolled gradually and reluctantly down his fair oval cheeks; they were not like the sudden, drenching shower, that leaves the air purer and the sky bluer, but the drops that issue from the wounded bark formed of the life-blood of the tree.

Beautiful was the spot where the boy sat, and beautiful the vernal morning that awakened Nature to the joy and the beauty of youth. The fountain, over whose basin he was leaning, was one of those clear, deep, pellucid springs, that gush up in the green wilds of southern Georgia, forming a feature of such exquisite loveliness in the landscape, that the traveller pauses on the margin, feeling as if he had found one of those enchanted springs of which we read in fairy land, whose waters are too bright, too pure, too serene for earth.

The stone which formed the basin of the fountain was smooth and calcareous, hollowed out by the friction of the waters, and gleaming white and cold through their diaphanous drapery. In the centre of this basin, where the spring gushed in all its depth and strength, it was so dark it looked like an opaque body, impervious to the eye, whence it flowed over the edge of its rocky receptacle in a full, rejoicing current, sweeping over its mossy bed, and bearing its sounding tribute to the Chattahoochee, "rolling rapidly." The mossy bed to which we have alluded was not the verdant velvet that covers with a short, curling nap, the ancient rock and the gray old tree, but long, slender, emerald-green plumes, waving under the water, and assuming through its mirror a tinge of deep and irradiant blue. Nothing can be imagined more rich and graceful than this carpet for the fountain's silvery tread, and which seems to bend beneath it, as the light spray rustling in the breeze. The golden water-lily gleamed up through the crystal, and floated along the margin on its long and undulating stems

This was the favourite haunt of Marcus, and he had baptized it by the name of the *Long Moss Spring*. It was here he had often indulged in his dreams of ambition, and it was here he now yielded to the deadening influences of despair. The despair of a child caused by a father's shame and perjury is enough to make angels weep.

"Marcus!" said a hoarse voice near him. He turned round, and beheld his father, whose wild and haggard countenance looked at him through the leafy curtain of the fountain. "Marcus!" repeated he, pushing aside the boughs, and coming and sitting down on the rock by his side; "will you let me sit by you a few moments? I have something I wish to say to you, and this place is so tranquil—so sweet!"

"Will I *let* you, father? Oh, don't speak to me in that way."

"I have no right to force my polluted presence on you, my son. After what passed last night, I cannot blame you if you refuse to own such a wretch as your father. I little thought, yesterday morning, when I left you with such presumptuous confidence, I should return like the swine, to its wallow in the mire. The man who accompanied me home must have known my besetting weakness, for he tempted me sorely before I yielded, and then taking advantage of my condition, induced me to make the bargain with him which perjured my soul, and severed the last link that binds my children to me. Marcus, you told me last night you was afraid you would kill me."

"Oh! father, don't recall those dreadful words—I was distracted—I didn't know what I said. Forgive me, father; I never *can* forgive myself."

"No, Marcus, reproach not yourself. Those words, and some others you uttered, may prove my salvation yet. I cannot hope that you will rely on my promises of reformation; but I never have felt as I have since I saw you and little Katy weeping on each other's necks, in the arms of that faithful negro, of whose care I was about to deprive you. Your words pierced me to the heart's core. The fumes of

inebriation dispersed, and I loathed myself in dust and ashes All the livelong night I have been upon my knees, on this very rock, praying for help from on high. I make no more self-righteous boasts. I throw myself on the mercy of God, in the humble hope that He will not cast me off. 'Though our sins be as scarlet, they may be made white as wool.' Alas! mine would the pure waters of this fountain incarnadine, dyeing them with the hue of blood."

"Father, I wish last night were blotted from existence. I feel as if I should never be happy again."

"Strange, that hope should spring from the very ashes of despair. But it is even so, my son. Lost, degraded as I am, unworthy to hold fellowship with my innocent children, or even with the dark African of a whiter soul, I feel a vitality that I thought annihilated before. It seems as if I had heard a revelation from heaven, making known to me that you, my son, were to lead me back to virtue and to peace. It came to me when I was grovelling on my knees at midnight. It grew clearer at breaking day. Just now, a voice seemed to sound in my ear, like a voice from heaven, 'Arise and go to thy son. Thy son on earth shall yet lead thee to thy Father in heaven.'"

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Marcus. It was all he could utter, but he took his hand and pressed it in both his own, and they thus sat mutely together, looking down into the dark heart of the fountain whence the silver rills were gushing. These waters were an emblem of regeneration. Marcus, with the transilient spirit of youth, bounded from despair to hope, and the whole aspect of nature was changed. The thought of his lovely benefactress came like a rainbow of promise, spanning the spray of the fountain, and reminding him of the covenant he had made with his own soul, when she bade him farewell. It inspired him to make a new covenant, that he would fulfil the glorious mission Heaven had committed into his hands, of reclaiming his father; and if it required the filial devotion of his whole life, he would no think it too dear a price to pay for such a blessing. He had previously been

incited by the desire of lifting *himself* from obscurity and poverty, of providing for his little sister the means of education; but now a higher, holier motive was added to these. He had been looking forward to the struggle of life as one who was to go on unaided and alone, stemming a counter-current, that threatened to sweep away in its stronger tide the frail bark of his hopes. Now, he must turn that strong, dark current in a different direction; he must make it flow along with the pure, rippling stream on which he himself was borne; he must purify and gild it, by mingling the once opposing waves. He upbraided himself for ever looking on his father with loathing and scorn, when under the influence of his fatal passion; for the lofty tone he had often assumed, when entreaties and supplications had been in vain. He would henceforth regard him in sorrow, rather than indignation, and by treating him with constant deference and tenderness, restore him to his own self-respect. Conforming to these noble resolutions, he induced him to accompany him in all his hunting and fishing expeditions, never leaving him for his own amusement, but convincing him that his fellowship was indispensable for his enjoyment.

As the resisting tree, shaken by the whirlwind, but not uprooted, only clings more firmly to its native soil, Aunt Milly was more deeply implanted in the affections and interests of the household since the night of her threatened removal. It cannot be said that Aunt Milly forgot the ingratitude of her master to her fidelity, or his perjury to her departed mistress; but her overmastering love for the children enabled her to forgive the wrongs inflicted by the father; and she knew, too, that her duty as a Christian required her to return good for evil. While injuries remain cut in, deep as life, on the heart of the red child of the wilderness, they are traced on the *surface* of the African's, and may be effaced by the breath of kindness.

"Do not be angry with my poor father, Aunt Milly," said Marcus, with his sweet, persuading voice; "he was tempted

by that evil man. He was no more himself at the time than if he were crazy. *I* was crazy myself for a few moments, and knew not what I was doing."

"Oh! young master, if it hadn't been for you—Lord a marcy—if I live to the age of Methusah, I never shall forget it; you warnt a boy then, you was a sperrit; you were supernateral. It was a maracle, and nothing else; Simon says so; and he says the man couldn't hurt you, nohow he could fix it, any more than Daniel could the fiery children."

"Daniel was a prophet, and a good man, Aunt Milly. He was the one that was cast in the lion's den, and whom the Lord defended from their fury."

"That's just what I meant, exactly. I does mistake sometimes, but I means right; I does mean to put burning coals on ole master's head, for the preacher says it's our duty to do it."

"What do you understand by that, Aunt Milly? You don't believe, I hope, that you ought to take live coals from the chimney, and pour them on your master's head."

"No, Master Marcus; I know better than all that. It means to sarve one good; when they do *you* bad, to speak pleasant and 'cifical; when they are cross and *contrary*, and when they strike you on one side, to turn right round and let 'em strike t'other; that's what it means. And I knows, if *I've* injured anybody, and they does so to me, I feels as bad as if burning coals was sticking to the top of my head."

One evening, they were sitting under a little stoup in front of the cabin, at that twilight hour when the labours of the day are over, but the exercises of the evening not yet commenced, —that hour of sweet tranquillity and rest. The river rolled before them, reflecting in its sparkling waters the gorgeous tints of departing day; the crimson shading off into a deepening orange, the orange melting into flakes of glittering silver. Lazily the old ferry-boat lay against the bank, the long poles thrown across the wet planks, and a red handkerchief of Milly's fastened to the lantern-post, fluttering like a banner in the breeze. It was a device of Marcus, who had been giving a

pleasure trip to Milly and Katy, and who had converted the red turban of the former into a flag of triumph.

Marcus looked at his father, and exulted to see that the vacant and haggard aspect of inebriation had given place to a calm and intelligent expression. His complexion was clear of that purple hue with which the god of the grape marks the face of his votaries. He was dressed with neatness and respectability, for Milly always took great care of her master's person; and one of her greatest sorrows, during his fits of intoxication, was the personal neglect they induced. The soiled linen, the unshaven beard, and matted locks were sore afflictions to her pride, for she said, "If a man was born a gentleman, and likely looking besides, it was a crying sin to make himself into a live brute."

A gentleman was seen winding through the path that skirted the river's edge. He was mounted on horseback, and rode leisurely along, looking earnestly on the family trio.

"It is Mr. Bellamy!" exclaimed Marcus, leaping from the steps to the ground. Katy flew after him, and Warland, walking with slow steps, went forward to greet the friend who thus proved himself true to his promise. Had *he* been true? This self-interrogation brought a blush of shame to his cheek, as he felt the cordial grasp of Mr. Bellamy's hand, but he did not shrink from his kindly-beaming glance, for he resolved to tell him of his shameful lapse, even at the risk of forfeiting all his good-will. Mr. Bellamy seemed gratified at his reception and at the appearance of family comfort that met his eye. He pressed the hand of Marcus with parental kindness, and taking the smiling, blushing Katy in his arms, bore her in triumph to the cabin. Milly came to the door of the kitchen, dropping low and emphatic curtsies, and Uncle Simon hobbled out to take care of his horse.

"Well, my friend," said he, sitting down on the wooden bench in the stoup, "the world seems to have gone better with you since I saw you last. I am glad my little friends here have not forgotten me, for I have often thought of them."

"Forgotten!" repeated Marcus; "how could we forget friends so kind as you and Mrs. Bellamy?"

"Why didn't she come too?" whispered Katy.

"She could not leave home just now, but you shall see her one of these days. She put some presents in my valise for you and Marcus, which I will show you presently."

Katy was burning with impatience to know what the rich and beautiful lady had sent her; but Marcus, grateful to be remembered in any way, scarcely cared to know in what manner. A withered leaf sent to *him* by *her* hand would be cherished as a sacred relic; still when Mr. Bellamy opened his valise and displayed the elegant books his wife had deposited there for Marcus, and the nice frocks for Katy, he felt a glow of gratitude and delight words would have vainly endeavoured to express. A dress for Aunt Milly and a gorgeous handkerchief for her head were hailed with equal enthusiasm.

After supper, at which Milly flourished with more than her usual aristocracy, for she had a splendid dish of fish to set before him, besides fried eggs and bacon, when the pipes were lighted and the blue smoke began to give an Indian summer atmosphere to the cabin, Mr. Bellamy reverted to the conversation he had had six months before, and asked Warland if he remembered it. Marcus, believing that his father would prefer the absence of the children, took Katy's hand, who still hugged her presents to her bosom, and carrying his books in his arms, went to the kitchen, where he exhibited the beautiful engravings they contained to the wondering and enraptured eyes of Milly and Simon. Warland did not deceive Mr. Bellamy; he related the scene so disgraceful to himself, so honourable to his son, which has already been recorded, and the thorough change he believed wrought within himself in consequence of his boy's conduct.

"Yes, Mr. Bellamy, you see before you a fallen man, utterly unworthy of your confidence; still so dreadful was the shock I received that night, so terrible the revulsion of my feelings, I have since loathed the very idea of drink; I think I could

it without being tempted, but I may be deceived. I do not ask any favour for myself—I ought not to receive any—but for my children. Sir, any thing you could do for them would be a blessing worthy of eternal gratitude. My boy *is* a noble child; he *was* born for something better than the miserable destiny to which I have doomed him."

"You judge too hardly of yourself. I am encouraged and strengthened in all my hopes with regard to you. One lapse, so sincerely repented of, is less than I dared to expect. No, no, Warland, I am not going to give you up so readily; your countenance is the seal of your reformation. I never saw a man improved so much in six months; I scarcely recognised you. I am not afraid to trust you. I am more afraid that you will reject the situation I am about to offer, as beneath your merits and ambition."

Warland turned an inquiring glance upon his friend—"There is no situation that you would offer me that I should consider too low for acceptance, if it brought my children within the pale of civilized life."

"I have a large plantation," said Mr. Bellamy, "and a great number of negroes, that require superintendence in their labour. I have always found it difficult to obtain an overseer qualified for the office—one who can combine the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re*. The one whom I now employ will be dismissed in a short time. Will you supply his place? You can bring your talents and education to bear upon the office; for the slaves do homage to mind, and know, as if by intuition, the man whom knowledge has enlightened and polished, from the unlettered boor. You shall have a salary sufficient for the support of your family. Marcus I intend to send immediately to school; and my wife, who has been entreating me to adopt a little girl, will take little Katy under her own immediate charge. I wish I could offer you a situation more congenial, but I think it better than the one you now occupy. It is rather as an assistant overseer I want to engage you, for I devote a great deal of my own time to super-

intending my plantation, and watching over the interests of my slaves."

"Most gladly, most gratefully would I accept the proposition," replied Warland, deeply sensible of the kindness of his new friend, "could I believe myself qualified for its duties; but ought I, who have so lately manifested such a melancholy instance of the want of self-government, assume the control of others? Ought I to take advantage of your benevolence, and perhaps expose you to disappointment and loss?"

"I am willing to expose myself to all the risk; but you must not give me more credit than is due. Mrs. Bellamy has been a quickening spirit to me, and planned the whole, leaving me nothing but a willing coöperation in her designs. Your boy has perfectly bewitched her. She looks upon him as a young eaglet, whose yet unfledged wings will one day bear him to a sunbright eyrie. I think myself he was born for distinction, and that he will attain it. Will you lay the first stepping-stone for him?"

"I cannot refuse. I will do all I can to deserve your confidence. The time has been when such an offer would have been considered by me an unpardonable insult; now, I feel ennobled by it. Let me call my son, and communicate to him his brightening prospects."

Marcus, while he felt the most intense gratitude to Mr. Bellamy, could not help shrinking from the idea of his father's becoming an overseer. He had been thinking so long of seeing him reinstated in his former standing in society as a gentleman and a scholar, that any position short of that seemed inferior to his merits, and below his ambition. Mr. Bellamy read all this in the boy's expressive countenance, and he liked him better for his noble pride.

"Your father will be my friend, my boy," said he. "I mean he shall dignify his office, and raise it to a higher stand than it usually occupies; and I consider it only a preparatory step to his future advancement. Had I made him a gratuitous

proposition, he would have rejected it at once. I could think of nothing better than this at present."

"Do not think me ungrateful, sir," said Marcus; "we cannot fail to be happy near you and Mrs. Bellamy. It ought to be the business of our whole lives to endeavour to repay your kindness. Words can never do it, I know; but I hope some day my actions can speak my heart."

The boy spoke with an earnest grace and a kindling blush. Every strong emotion sent a glowing herald to his cheek, and a radiant messenger to his eye, bearing witness to its reality and truth.

When Milly learned, through Marcus, the change in his father's situation, her family pride was at first wounded; for if there is any thing an African despises, it is a common overseer. But when she heard that little Katy was to be taken into the household of that "sweet Mrs. Bellamy," and that she herself was to go with her and take care of her; that master Marcus was to be sent to a fine school, where he would prepare for college, and associate with gentlemen's sons, she was in a fever of joyful excitement. She had arrayed little Katy in one of the pretty frocks Mrs. Bellamy had sent her, and it so adorned the child, that, seeing herself in the mirror of Aunt Milly's admiring eyes, she blushed at her own loveliness.

"Katy will be a lady, and ride in a fine carriage," said Milly, turning her round and round, and smoothing down the folds of her short, redundant skirt; "she no wear homespun no more; she live among the quality folks."

"Katy will be a good girl," said Marcus, putting his arms round the beautiful child; "and she will love the dear lady who is so good to us all. She will not be vain, nor proud, because she may wear a finer dress, for that would spoil all her sweetness."

"Jist hear him," said Milly, giving Simon a punch in his side; "he allos sets everybody right, and make 'em feel 'shamed. He born for a preacher."

Simon answered not, for his heart was full. The thought

of being parted from his friend filled him with unutterable sorrow; and when the children saw his dark, wrinkled cheeks irrigated with tears, sympathizing drops filled their before glad eyes. Aunt Milly began to rock, like a storm-blown tree.

"She'd never thought about it. What would they do without Simon, and what would Simon do without them? Poor ole Simon! Poor ole Milly!"

This was really a dark cloud to their new-born happiness. They all loved the *old soldier*, as they called him, and mourned to think they must leave him behind.

Milly promised to write to him by proxy; Marcus to come and see him as soon as possible; and Katy never to leave him at all. Still poor Simon sat with his head bowed on his hands, his breast heaving with stifled sobs. "He spoke not, for his grief was very great."

CHAPTER IV.

"It was permitted in my pilgrimage
To rest beside the fount beneath the tree,
Beholding there no vision, but a maid
Whose form was light and graceful as the palm,
Whose heart was pure and jocund as the fount,
And spread a freshness and a verdure round."—TAYLOR.

No fairer, richer picture of southern life could be drawn than from the plantation of Mr. Bellamy. Far as the eye could reach, his magnificent cotton and corn fields rolled in snowy opulence, or waved in golden splendour in the undulating gale. The house was situated on a gradual eminence, which was crowned with a beautiful grove of young hickories, and was in consequence known by the name of Hickory Hill. It was also called Bellamy Place by those familiar with the name of its munificent master. Occupying so commanding a site, with its broad, spreading wings, and lofty piazza that extended the whole length of the building, it was a kind of landmark to the traveller who might be journeying through

the pine woods that girdled the boundaries of his domain. At night, when its myriad windows reflected the hospitable radiance glowing within, and the pine torches blazed from the tall posts without, it resembled a light-house, flashing its beacon lustre on the eye of the stranger, perchance in danger of being lost in that unknown sea of verdure. On each side of the mansion-house a long row of neat, white cabins, individualized by some favourite tree, or vine, or plant, showed that the master, who had so amply provided for his own comfort, had not forgotten the accommodation of his slaves. Behind each of these cabins was a small garden, belonging to the negro who occupied it, which was as much his exclusive property as the fields he assisted to cultivate were his master's. They all had time allowed them to till these peculiar lots, as the luxuriant melon vines and flourishing vegetables indicated, and every Saturday afternoon they carried their produce to market, as well as the poultry and eggs they themselves had raised. It is true, they were *slaves*, but their chains never clanked. Each separate link was kept moist and bright with the oil of kindness, applied with a downy touch. Mr. and Mrs. Bellamy were both actuated by high and holy principles. They felt deeply and seriously the responsibilities resting upon them. They were each the inheritors of a large fortune, consisting, as it usually does at the South, of negro families. None had been purchased except where marriages had been formed, and the wife or husband pleaded in behalf of their chosen partners, and Mr. Bellamy had never violated the promise made to his dying father, that he would not separate the families which had grown up around him, or sell *one* accessible to gratitude and kindness. He respected the holy ties of nature, and believed that the domestic affections glowed as warmly and purely in the dark bosom of the African as the fairer European's. No severed, bleeding heart ever accused him before God of its widowhood and desolation; no cry of maternal anguish; no sable Rachel, "weeping for her children," would rise up in judgment against him, at the tribunal of sovereign justice. Did all southern planters

imitate his noble example, the foulest blot that darkens the page of slavery would be effaced, its deepest reproach wiped away. Those who batten on the sale of human blood would be obliged to stop their languishing traffic, and resort to some more honourable and Christian occupation.

Could Mr. Bellamy have believed that the happiness and best interests of his slaves would be secured by presenting them the gift of freedom, he would have done it. But he felt, that by turning hundreds of helpless beings adrift upon the world, he would be rather exposing them to want and temptation, than administering to their well-being.

"I didn't purchase them," thus reasoned he with his own conscience. "I did not wrest them from their native land, benighted and degraded as it is. I received them as a trust; and a heavy one it is. If I give them freedom, it will be like a diamond crown on the head of an infant. It will weigh it down, without its being conscious of its splendid value. No! though I would give all that I am worth, or ever expect to be worth, to be free from this moral encumbrance, I cannot shake it off without doing violence to my own sense of duty. I will endeavour to perform the work appointed by my great Task-master in such a manner, that when I am called to render up my account at the great day of reckoning, I can bare my heart to the blazing eye of Almighty truth, and say, 'Here am I, and the beings intrusted to my charge.'"

It was a lovely summer evening,—(in the South, as soon as the sun has passed the zenith, the evening is supposed to begin,)—and the windows of Bellamy Place were all opened to admit the balmy air, that flowed in redolent with a thousand perfumes exhaled from the wreathing vines and flowering shrubs. The lovely mistress of this charming spot had beautified it with all the wealth of Flora, and all the wild garlands of the forest. Every thing seemed to flourish under her gentle care, every thing took root and grew in her genial soil. The very air of heaven seemed to love her, for it always stole in blandly and fragrantly, even on the sultriest days, to kiss

her benign brow. This sweet evening she was sitting in a crimson-covered rocking chair, reading the pages of a book, that seemed "her inmost soul to find," while a young girl of about fourteen stood by her side, twisting the flowers of the white jasmine in her dark and braided locks. The sweet face of Mrs. Bellamy had lost none of the winning charms that distinguished her several years before, while the soft glow of health now added to its attraction. A dress of thin white muslin softened the graceful outlines of her figure, and the flowers with which youthful taste and affection had decorated her hair, gave even a juvenile loveliness to her appearance, congenial to the young maiden who was bending over her. Katy's violet eyes had lost none of their pensive loveliness of expression, nor had her pure white cheek won one tint of rose from the fragrant and elevated atmosphere she breathed; but the bright hue of her lips redeemed her face from the idea of pallidness, and there were moments when those drooping eyes, suddenly lifted, would flash with gay emotion, and a rosy shadow flit over the lilies of her cheek. On a low chair, a little removed from Mrs. Bellamy, sat a young mulatto girl, who, from her singular beauty and docility, was the pet of the household. Her hair, long, black, and shiny as an Indian's, with a slight inclination to wave, was braided behind in imitation of her mistress; her eyes were soft and bright as a gazelle's, and beneath her clear, dark cheek the red blood glowed with a vermeil tinge. Her teeth, white and transparent as alabaster, glittered when she smiled, and her walk had the springy, yet flowing, grace of the leopard's. Cora, for such was the name of the beautiful mulatto, was mistress of the needle, and had been brought up in the house, under the affectionate and watchful eye of her mistress. Her language, in consequence of this, was free from the peculiarities of the African dialect. Mrs. Bellamy loved Cora as tenderly as if no dusky tint shaded the ruby of her cheek; and had Mrs. Bellamy been an angel of light, Cora could not have worshipped her with more entire devotion.

"Can any thing look sweeter than that?" exclaimed Katy, appealing to Cora to admire the starry blossoms that gleamed on the dark satin of her mistress's hair.

"Mistress looks sweet, let her wear what she will," replied Cora, looking up from her work, with a bright smile.

"You are both flatterers," said Mrs. Bellamy, "and I know you are making me look too girlish," putting her hand to her head.

"Oh, please don't," cried both voices, "please don't spoil it."

At this moment a rapid step was heard ascending the stairs; there was a light bound over the threshold, and a youth of sixteen summers leaped into the centre of the room. Waving his straw-hat in one hand, while he pushed back with the other the fair brown curls from his moist brow, he cried,—

"Victory, dear Mrs. Bellamy! Victory, Katy! I've won the prize, the golden badge of merit, and I come to lay it at the feet of my benefactors." Then bending one knee with sportive grace before Mrs. Bellamy, he took from his neck a blue ribbon, from which was suspended a golden medal, and laid it on her lap.

"Well done, Marcus," said Mrs. Bellamy, gazing with pride and delight on the noble-looking boy who thus vindicated her early prophecy. "I knew you could not fail; this is only a foretaste of the honours that await you in a larger sphere."

"I hope so, madam; I hope so for your sake. I only cared to obtain this because I thought it would gratify you. What shall I do with it? I should despise myself tricked out with blue ribbons and trinkets. Katy must wear it till I return from college, and let it be in her eyes an emblem of ambition. It is in the form of a harp, Mrs. Bellamy, you see, strung with twisted threads of gold. It will remind Katy of her music, and how anxious you are that she should excel."

Marcus passed the azure band round the fair neck of Katy, who felt proud of wearing the badge of her brother's excellence. It was a prize awarded by a committee of gentlemen

for the best essay on a given subject written by the pupils of a high school, at which he had graduated. He could have entered college two years previous, but Mr. Bellamy thought him too young to be exposed to the temptations of such a life, and preferred that he should enter in advance, and thus shorten the time of his collegiate studies. He was to depart in a few weeks for the most distinguished university of the South, and should he bear away the first honours, Mr. Bellamy promised to reward him by sending him afterward to one of the literary institutions of the North. Burning with desire to prove himself worthy of this munificence, Marcus looked forward to his departure with the eager anticipations of youth, and the distinction he had just won seemed only an earnest of his future success.

When supper was announced, Warland came in with Mr. Bellamy, and took his seat at the table by the side of his children. While there was no apparent change in the person of the latter, *he* looked greatly altered, and the burden of many years seemed added to his frame. His hair was almost white, proof of the terrible warfare he had sustained with his bosom foe; his complexion was very pale, and his upright form bent from its perpendicular line; but his eye was clear, and the throne of an unclouded intellect. Though its light was ofttimes darkened by the shadows of memory, never since his dwelling with Mr. Bellamy had it been quenched in the night of intemperance. He had performed his duties to his benefactor with unerring fidelity and marked success, and it was now as an honoured friend and faithful coadjutor, even as a beloved brother, that he remained in the household of the planter. Aunt Milly came in her ancient costume of the white turban and stiff white apron, and stood with folded hands behind her master's chair till the customary blessing consecrated the board; then, with an elevated brow and aristocratic mien, she carried her gilded waiter back and forth to supply the wants of her children, as she always called them. and "ole master." There was a peculiar delicacy of kindness in Mrs. Bellamy's giving this office to Milly, for her own servants were trained

to wait upon her table, and did its honours with more grace and dexterity, than one belonging, like Aunt Milly, to the *ancient regime.* She knew she would be happy in proportion as she thought herself useful, and she had no desire to wean Marcus or Katy from their allegiance to their true and faithful nurse. Sometimes the little ebony images that stood on each side of the table waving beautiful brushes of sun-eyed peacock's feathers, with tremendous flourishes, would purposely hit her lofty turban, but she never swerved from her majestic course, satisfying her dignity by giving them a rebuking roll of her large eyeballs. The beautiful mulatto girl had the post of honour by her mistress's chair, and a tall, handsome mulatto man, with an apron of snowy whiteness reaching to his knees, and a waiter under his arm, held the same position at the right hand of his master. Many a brilliant eye-beam and glittering smile were exchanged across the table by this distinguished pair. They were betrothed in marriage, and the coming Christmas was appointed for their nuptials. The coquettish Cora denied the truth of this fact, and declared it was only a false report, and that there was nothing in the world in it; but when her mistress told her what a beautiful wedding-dress she was going to give her, and what a fine supper too, she hung her head and laughed, and said "she shouldn't wonder if she did get married."

Cora was the belle of the plantation, and there were others besides King, the handsome mulatto, who contended for her smiles. There was one negro, of Cimmerian blackness, of the name of Hannibal, who was a formidable rival to the gallant King; not that Cora regarded him with a favouring eye, but he possessed great muscular power, and his temper when roused was fierce as the goaded lion's. Mr. Bellamy had more trouble with him than any other slave on the plantation, but he was at the same time one of his most valuable men. He was nick-named the General, and honoured his title by exercising authority over his younger and weaker brethren. He was attached to his master, and when no counter feelings opposed his

sense of obligation to him, he would work with an enthusiasm that communicated like wild-fire to all around him.

"Push on," they would exclaim, "don't you see the General ahead?" And the cotton bolls would fly thick as northern snow-flakes, and the huge baskets heave high with their downy burdens.

But lately Hannibal had been in a dark sullen mood, and neither persuasion nor coercion had any effect on his obstinate resistance of duty. Mr. Bellamy, believing that a spirit like his would spurn at delegated authority, told Warland whenever symptoms of rebellion appeared in the Carthaginian general to refer him to *him*, and he usually succeeded by personal influence in recalling him to duty and obedience. Now smarting from the pangs of disappointed love, and maddened by the triumphant happiness of his rival, he broke out in open mutiny, and was placed, by the orders of his master, in solitary confinement, till he had leisure to reflect on the best course to pursue with the offending slave. As soon as supper was over Mr. Bellamy was about to leave the room, anxious to perform his disagreeable task, fearful that he might be compelled to have recourse to the dreaded alternative of selling him, and filling with anguish a mother's heart. Hannibal was the only son of an aged mother, who was now trembling in her cabin for the consequences of his rebellion to his much-enduring master.

Mrs. Bellamy, who noticed the clouded brow of her husband, followed him into the passage, that she might learn the cause.

"Let me go to him, my husband," said she; "I think I have more influence over him than any one else, and I know so well the cause of his present wayward humour. If love has subverted empires, razed cities to their foundations, and shaken the boasted reason of the white man, we ought to make great allowance for its influence on less enlightened minds and stronger passions. You are weary, I see you are; give me the lamp and key, and I pledge my word, that Hannibal

shall return to his allegiance on the morrow, like a true and valiant soldier."

"Isabel, this will never do. It is a shame to impose such a task on you. Indeed, I cannot allow it."

"But you must, Mr. Bellamy. When did you ever refuse any request of mine? A woman knows so much better where all the keys of the human heart are placed than man. Hannibal has a heart, as his passionate love for Cora but too plainly shows."

Gently but irresistibly she drew the lamp and key from her husband's hand, and glided on to the solitary room, where the General was awaiting the threatened visit of his master, arming himself with strength to withstand both the voice of reason and the menaces of violated authority. The key turned—a bright light flashed into the apartment, and instead of the kind but severe countenance he expected to behold, the sweet face and white-robed form of his mistress beamed upon his gaze. She stood alone before the tall, powerful negro, over whose raven features passion had, if possible, spread a darker hue.

"Hannibal," said she, bending on him her serene and serious eyes, "I am very sorry to see you here, in disgrace. What have you been doing to deserve this punishment?"

"Nothing, mistress, just nothing at all."

"Was it your master, or Mr. Warland, who had you confined here?"

"'Twas master. I tell you what, mistress, if it had been anybody but master, I'd a killed him fust."

"You don't mean to tell *me*, Hannibal, that your master confined you for *nothing?* You must not say that a second time. Look me in the face, and tell me, if you can, that your master has ever been unjust or unkind to you."

"It makes no difference, mistress, who is kind, as long as there is *one* that treats me like a dog. It turns my heart black to everybody. I can't help what I do, if they kill me for it."

"If you mean Cora, you are very wrong, Hannibal. She is not to blame if she loves another better than you. She

cannot help it. Besides, King paid her a great deal of attention, and tried hard to win her, before you ever said a word about loving her. If you had spoken first, very likely she would have liked you best."

"I don't know what to say to please the ladies," said the African chief, with a grim smile; "I can't put on airs and make believe I'm a gentleman, like that yellow boy they think such a 'Donis—all on 'em."

"Now, Hannibal, I want you to listen to me," said the lady, setting down her lamp, and taking a seat on a wooden bench; "you ought to have more sense than to lose all your dignity of character for a young girl, who loved another before she knew you had one thought of her. You make yourself very unhappy; you set a bad example to the other negroes, who look up to you as a pattern; you disturb the peace of your indulgent master, and you fill with anguish the heart of your mistress."

"I never thought of giving pain to you, mistress." The tone of his voice was softened, and his head began to droop towards his breast.

"I have always treated you kindly. I have always tried to make you happy. You know when you were sick last winter, and laid up so long, how we watched over you, your master and myself, and brought you back to health and strength. You blessed us then, and said you never would forget it as long as you lived. You said it was not the medicine or the watching you thanked us for, for that might have been for our own interests, but for the tears we shed when we thought you were dying; that proved we cared for you, for your own sake. Don't you remember it?"

"Yes—that I do, mistress—that I do—every word you say be true." His lips began to quiver, and tears chased each other down his midnight cheeks.

"I see you are sorry, Hannibal. You do not wish your master to sell you."

"The Lord have mercy on me!—no, mistress."

"Well, if you ever trouble him again, as you have to-day, he is resolved to do it. He will not allow the peace of the whole plantation to be disturbed by one, of whom he has the power to rid himself. This is a last appeal. Will you follow me to your master, and promise hereafter to curb your rebel passions, proving yourself worthy of his confidence and esteem? or will you be banished from the home where you have so long been sheltered in kindness and affection?"

"Take me to master—take me to master," said the melted and repentant negro; "let him punish me any way he please —only let me stay—best master and mistress nigger ever had in *this* world. Pray forgive poor Hannibal, mistress—he never do so no more—never."

Mrs. Bellamy lifted the lamp and left the room, beckoning him to follow. Looking back with an angelic smile upon the black shadow rolling behind, she led the way to the sitting-room, and opening the door, beckoned her husband to approach.

"I have brought you a penitent," said she, "one sincerely convinced of his error, and anxious for your forgiveness. I commend him to your mercy, firmly believing this will be his last offence."

Leaving her husband with the subdued General, she returned to her adopted children, rejoicing in the success of her mission. That night, when she retired to bed, and was about to drop the muslin curtains over the open windows, that the night-air might come in mellowed through its folds, she heard the strains of a violin directly beneath. Bending out, she discerned distinctly, by the sparkling starlight, the tall, dark form of Hannibal, thus exercising a minstrel power, in the solemn stillness of the evening. He was the Orpheus of Hickory Hill, who, if he did not move the stones and trees, set all the black feet quivering whenever his magic bow touched the resounding strings. That he had come this night, beneath her window, to wake the tones of his beloved instrument, was a touching proof that the evil spirit had indeed departed from him; and as she listened to the low, plaintive melody, so different

from his usual brisk, enlivening measures, a tear glistened in her mild eyes.

"Poor Hannibal," said she, "I wish I had another Cora for him. There is more depth of feeling and passion in him than the handsome, smiling King. But she is not the first woman who has been charmed by a showy exterior, nor will she be the last."

Long after she had sunk to rest, the wounded heart of Hannibal breathed its sorrow and remorse, in the sweet complaining notes of his viol, while the midnight stars gleamed with lonely lustre on his brow.

The time for the departure of Marcus drew near. As he was to return during the long holidays of the next summer, the separation would be comparatively short, and there was no cause for grief at parting. But Aunt Milly and Katy wept bitterly, notwithstanding the former imagined a college a kind of Pandemonium, where the Evil Spirit held his gala days, and she tried to make Marcus promise to nail a horse-shoe over his door, to keep off the witches. He must never look at the new moon over his left shoulder, nor tell his dreams before breakfast, if they boded evil. She gave him a little parcel, containing camphor, asafœtida, and the spirits of turpentine, sewed tightly to prevent the charm from escaping; but as this would not impart a very agreeable perfume to his wardrobe, with all due gratitude for Aunt Milly's kindness, he took the liberty of casting aside the boasted amulet against disease. The nice woollen socks which she had knit and Katy marked were carefully preserved, as well as all the parting tokens of regard presented by Mr. and Mrs. Bellamy. The latter encircled his finger with a gold ring, sparkling with a ruby gem, when she bade him farewell.

"You remember," she said, "in the eastern tale you read aloud to us the other night, the ring which the genius Lyndaric gave to Amurath, whose warning pressure reminded him, when he deviated from virtue and truth. Let this golden circle be to you Lyndaric's magic ring. You recollect, when

the ruby turned pale, it was an indication of the displeasure of the genius. If you are ever tempted into the paths of sin, though your ruby gem may retain its lustre, imagine that my heart is fainting from the disappointment of its fondest hopes; and remember, above all, my dear Marcus, that a greater than Lyndaric has placed a monitor in your breast, whose warning voice, if slighted, will turn to thunder in your ears."

Marcus kissed the hand that gave the ring, with a heart too full for utterance, and was turning away—

"Not so, my son," said Mrs. Bellamy, folding her arms around him; "a mother's fondest blessing rest upon you."

Once more Marcus felt as if the heavens were opened, and the spirit of his departed mother folded her wings over his heart.

Mr. Bellamy's parting gift was a gold watch. "Let this teach you the value of time, my boy, so that you waste none of its diamond sparks. God bless you."

Thus embalmed with blessings, and crowned with gifts, the tears of sweet Katy on his cheeks, and the sobs of Aunt Milly still echoing in his ears, Marcus left Hickory Hill, with the morning sun. He rode on horseback to the next town, to meet the stage that was to bear him to the place of his destination. His father accompanied him there, and a negro followed in a buggy, bearing his trunk. The conversation of the father and son was full of earnest interest. Marcus thought of their interview on the margin of the Long Moss Spring, and pure and deep as the gush of its silvery waters was the gratitude that overflowed his heart, for the blessings that had followed them since that sad and clouded hour.

Towards the close of the second day's journey, the stage stopped at a blacksmith's shop, that a broken tire might be repaired. Marcus was glad of the opportunity of giving freedom to his limbs, and ran forward through the pine woods that shaded all that portion of the country. Straight and symmetrical as the pillars of an antique temple, the auburn-coloured trunks bore aloft their green and odorous crests, meeting overhead, and forming a fretwork, such as man, with

all his boasted art, could never imitate. Marcus heard the music of a gushing spring, gurgling over the rocks, and he hastened on, to bathe his thirsty lips in its waters.

"Oh!" thought he, "that I could see my own dear mossy spring! that I could behold the long blue plumes curling so gracefully over the white limestone, and under the clear waves!"

There was a sudden turn in the road where the spring spouted, and Marcus started back in astonishment, as he leaped forward to plunge his head into the basin. A young girl sat upon a rock, just above the fountain, dipping a riding-whip in the water, and flirting the drops about in a sportive manner. She was habited in an equestrian garb, though no horse was near. A small hat, with black, drooping feathers, sat jauntily on her head, and a long, dark riding-skirt, though drawn up in many a fold, still almost touched the edge of the fountain. She looked up as Marcus drew near, and discovered a face of singular brightness and expression. She was a deep brunette, but a rich sunset glow lighted up the twilight of her cheeks, and a smile, mischievous and even saucy, curled her red lip as she gazed on the young intruder, as much as to say, "Who are you, sir, and how dare you come so near *my* dominions?"

"Have I permission to drink of the spring?" asked he, taking off his hat in courtesy to the nymph of the fountain, who nodded her head haughtily, though the same smile illumined her face. He knelt down on the rock, and bowed his head to the gush of the waters. A sudden shower drenched his hair, while a wild burst of laughter rang musically in his ear. The fair equestrian had amused herself, by throwing up the water with her whip, and saturating the sunny locks that swept on its surface.

Emboldened by her mirth, Marcus shook the drops from his head, and asked her if she was the fairy of the spring.

"No," said she, laughing; "I am only a poor little maiden, who has lost her pony. My saddle turned, I jumped off; Fairy—(you see, I am greater than a fairy, for I have one

under my sway)—Fairy cut all kinds of capers, and ran off, nobody knows whither. Haven't you seen a stray pony, young gentleman, in your travels?"

Marcus could not help smiling at the perfect nonchalance of the young girl, and at the coolness with which she had seated herself, at that late hour of the day, waiting for the recreant that might never return. He longed to offer his services, to go in search of the stray animal, but the stage might come along during his absence, and he be left in the wild woods, at the mercy of this gay but haughty damsel. While he was explaining his situation, and regret at his inability to offer his services as her knight, a negro approached, leading the meek and penitent-looking pony, who came up to the side of its young mistress, with a look of human sensibility, deprecating her anger.

"Naughty Fairy," said she, fondly stroking its dark-brown mane; "shame on you to leave your mistress in the lurch. You shall feed on dry bread and water till morning to pay for it. No, I thank you, sir," said she, as Marcus eagerly held out his hand to assist her to mount, bounding at the same time on its back, with the lightness of a sylph; "I want no help. Pray, tell me the name of the brave knight who was so willing to help me in my extremity."

Marcus blushed deeply at this sarcastic speech, but he answered with becoming spirit:—"My time is not my own, fair miss. Should I lose my passage and my trunk, I should be in a sorry plight in these woods."

"Oh, we could give you a thousand trunks for one," answered the proud little lady, "and our house is large enough to entertain all the wandering squires in Christendom. So, you will not tell me your name?" added she, with a look so soft and womanly it was quite bewitching from contrast.

"Most willingly," said Marcus, "hoping to receive the same favour from my fair companion. I am called Marcus Warland, a name I hope to adorn with the highest honours of the university to which I am bound."

"Marcus Warland!" repeated she—and Marcus thought he had never heard his name sound so sweetly before. "That does not sound badly. So, you are ambitious, it seems."

"Very—there are no bounds to my ambition. I feel as if I could dare all, and attain all. But are you not going to return my courtesy, and tell me by what name I may remember *you?*"

"And who told you to remember me at all?" answered the wild brunette, putting her foot in the stirrup, preparatory to flight. "You will forget me as soon as Fairy plunges in these woods. Let me see. They call me Puss, Pet, Missy, and Tom-boy—Dash and Lightning sometimes. You may take your choice. They are all pretty and fanciful."

"I should think Lightning the most appropriate," said Marcus, feeling the lambent brightness of her glances playing on his face.

"You talk very well for your age," she cried, with a serious air. "You can't be more than sixteen, I am sure?"

"You guess marvellously well," replied Marcus, laughing at her odd inquisitive ways, though vexed that she would not gratify his own curiosity. The rumbling of the stage was heard as it came thundering down the hill.

"Good-bye, Master Marcus Warland," cried she, holding out her beautiful, ungloved hand, with a mixture of bashful archness and haughty condescension, "when you win all the blushing honours to which you are aspiring, may I be there to see and admire."

One cut of her slender whip on Fairy's flank, and Miss Lightning vanished from his sight, leaving him so dazzled and bewildered by the unexpected encounter, that he came near getting into the windows of the stage instead of the door.

Marcus had met many grown ladies and young misses at Mrs. Bellamy's, and the companionship of his refined and beautiful benefactress had given him an ease of manners in the society of ladies seldom met with at the usually awkward and doubtful era of his life. The remarkable beauty of his person,

combined with the frankness, spirit, and grace of his deportment, made him a favourite wherever he went. The consciousness of being able to please gave him a confidence that never overreached on the bounds of modesty, and a gayety chastened by perfect good breeding. But there was something so teasing, so baffling about this original brunette, so different from any one whom he had ever met before, that it haunted him, and even in his dreams the dark girl of the fountain pursued him, with her menacing little whip, and dashed the spray over his uncovered head.

CHAPTER V.

Dusky and radiant as the night,
The night of tropic skies—
The daughter of a darker race,
The maid with Arab eyes,
Smiles brightly on her bridal hour.
Ah me! that fate should stand,
Unbidden guest amid the cheer
Of that gay festal band.—BALLAD.

CHRISTMAS was at hand—the great saturnalia of the South—when for seven days the slave revels in all the joys of freedom, and, as in the ancient festivals celebrated in honour of the father of the gods, the master and mistress act a subordinate part. Whatever services are required during these gala days are liberally rewarded, though they may be spontaneously offered. An unprejudiced stranger, who wished to see some of the *lights* that illumine the darkness of slavery, would rejoice in the opportunity of visiting Bellamy Place while the holidays were infusing their gladdening influence through the whole plantation.

For two or three days previous, Mrs. Bellamy, assisted by the delighted Katy, was assorting the presents she had prepared for all the household slaves. Those who were called the field negroes were remembered by the bounty of the master, who

never assigned them a niggard boon. The gifts of Mrs. Bellamy generally consisted of a handsome calico dress, a radiant handkerchief, and those little showy, fancy articles that set off to advantage their shining and jetty skins. The little negroes were allowed to hang up their stockings, sure that St. Nicholas would fill them with sweet cakes and candy.

It was the morning of the first day of Christmas week, and with the earliest faint auroral streak merry voices were tumbling on the top of each other, and making the house ring with "Christmas gift, master!" "Christmas gift, mistress!" When a master and mistress so kind and liberal as Mr. and Mrs. Bellamy are thus aroused from their slumbers, the gift-seekers are never sent empty away, but the ready packets are tossed to the right owners, or a promise given that is faithfully kept. But it is not the master and mistress alone who are thus honoured. Every member of the house, whoever it may be, is saluted by the same greeting, and when the white population are satisfied with the honours they have received, the negroes run headlong against each other, repeating from the altitude of their lungs the annual, unwearied cry of "Christmas gift!" Then follows the exulting shout, "I've caught you!" with the climax of a laugh such as only a negro can send out through the ivory portals of sound.

The holidays were ushered in with unusual excitement, as the nuptials of King and Cora were to be celebrated with all the brilliancy befitting such distinguished personages. The marriage of the favourite household slave of a wealthy planter is a circumstance of nearly as much interest as that of a son or daughter. Here were *two* favourites, and of course preparations of unwonted magnificence were made. Mr. Bellamy, at the time his own mansion was built, had erected a large hall expressly for a dancing-room for his negroes, and every night of the annual festival the animating strains of the violin winged the feet which neither toil had stiffened nor slavery weighed down. The wedding of Cora was to be succeeded by a ball, to which the negroes of the neighbouring plantations were invited, and

for which invitations, written by Katy in her fairest hand, had already been circulated.

The only drawback to the hilarity of the occasion was the Carthaginian General. Though he was apparently subdued by the mild influence of his mistress, and was really so for the time, his passions were only slumbering. Like the chained mastiff that guarded his master's yard, they had lost none of their strength, but were ready to break loose and deal destruction around them. Following the counsels of Mrs. Bellamy, Cora put aside her little, coquettish, triumphant airs, and treated him with real kindness, but it seemed to have no effect on his dark and sullen mood. Mrs. Bellamy did not express the apprehensions that filled her mind, but she had a sad misgiving that something would happen to sadden the prospects of the beautiful mulatto. Still her hands loved to adorn her with the bridal robes, which enhanced, as they usually do, the natural beauty of the wearer. Cora's dress and the ornaments that decorated it were the Christmas gifts of her mistress, and many a fair bride of the race of snow would be proud to clothe herself in raiment as tasteful and becoming. The transparent Swiss muslin frock, the glistening white satin sash, the white blossoms that wreathed her jetty and braided hair, were all that a fashionable belle could desire. Her coral necklace and bracelets contrasted richly with the bright golden hue of her neck and arms; and deep and brilliant as the coral glowing under the darkening wave was the colour that dyed her round and dimpled cheeks.

As she stood before her mistress in the beauty of her bridal attire, smiling under her pleased and admiring gaze, a sudden sadness clouded her brow, and tears gathered unbidden into her soft, black eyes.

"I don't know what is the reason, mistress," said she, "but I feel so bad to-night; I do think something is going to happen to me or King; I ve seen so many bad signs lately."

"Oh, Cora, you must not believe in signs," said Katy.

"I can't help it, Miss Katy. I dreamed I was married last

night, and that is a sure sign of a funeral; and the owls have been hooting on an old tree back of the kitchen for more than a week."

"But you know there is a charm in a wedding-ring, Cora, that nothing can resist, so you must hasten to put one on," said Mrs. Bellamy, in a reassuring tone.

The ceremony was performed in a back sitting-room, which was decorated with holly and pine boughs, so that it looked like an evergreen bower. King, who was worthy of his royal name, would not have exchanged situations with Prince Albert, or any other potentate of Europe; and the black retinue that surrounded this son and daughter of Africa, whose paler complexions showed they approached a fairer race, gazed upon them with as much admiration and deference as England's royal pair ever inspired. But when the doors of the supper-room were thrown open, a frame building contiguous to the ball-room, the *coup d'œil* was dazzling as a sunburst. The table was brilliantly lighted and adorned with all the flowers a mild southern winter so liberally supplies. Cakes beautifully ornamented and frosted as white as ivory, oranges, confectionaries, and all the luxuries that are customary on such occasions, covered the board. These dainties were partly supplied by Mrs. Bellamy and partly by the negroes themselves, who took a pride and delight in appropriating some of their own earnings to adorn the marriage-feast. Cora, who sought in vain among the wedding guests for the powerful form and raven face of Hannibal, suffered her spirits to rebound from the weight that had oppressed them, and gayly laughed and brightly blushed, and gave herself fully to the enjoyment of woman's triumph hour. The transition from the supper to the ball-room was followed by greater hilarity and more unrestrained freedom. Wilder and wilder grew the mirth and excitement, till each fibre of every plank in the floor seemed to quiver beneath the bounding, flying, crossing, pigeon-winged feet that kept time to the quick, bewitching strains of the viol and the tambourine. It was inspiring to look on the

master of the last instrument; the way he rattled on the parchment was quite supernatural. Shutting his eyes and opening his mouth, and throwing back his head, his knuckles rang like brazen balls on the resounding instrument. Sometimes he would rap it thunderingly with his head, then whirling it with inconceivable rapidity to his feet, tap it with his heels and toes, then it would be dancing on his elbows, like a thing of life and instinct. Not satisfied with this surpassing display of agility, he would throw the tambourine on the floor, and whirling it round with the end of his forefinger, its little bells would jingle like a New England sleigh. All this time he seemed in a magnetic sleep, for it is questionable whether he ever unclosed his eyes.

King and Cora opened the ball with a grace that captivated every eye. Cora lightly touched the folds of her full, falling skirt with the tip of her white gloves, and put her pretty head on one side, as she had seen the white belles do in her mistress's drawing-room, and King kept up a bowing and swaying motion that waved the skirts of his coat to and fro, as well as the end of the white handkerchief that hung elaborately from his pocket. During a pause in the reels, Dancing Jack, as he was called far and near, took the centre of the floor and performed the *Virginia break-down*, in a style that defies description. Each separate joint and sinew danced, as if it were an individual self. If ever there was an example of rapidly accelerating, apparently perpetual, unwearied motion, it was exhibited by Dancing Jack. He became wild, frantic, superhuman, and finished at last by an exulting leap, then giving his right heel a tremendous rap, stood as if transformed to a black petrifaction. While Jack was enchanting his companions by his unexampled achievement, Cora stole out to arrange her hair, which had become disordered in the dance. As she passed out she saw a tall, dark figure lurking near the door, which she immediately recognised as Hannibal. Though she had a dread, amounting to horror, of her Herculean lover, she pitied his un-

requited attachment, and longed to address him some soothing words.

"Why don't you come in and dance, General?" said she, "or play on your violin for us? There's nobody can play like you."

"I'm no Dancing Jack," he replied, gloomily, "and if you on't need me one way, you needn't another. I wish you joy, Miss Cora; I hope you'll think of me, when next Christmas come round again."

"Thank you, Hannibal, to be sure I shall."

Cora ran up-stairs into Mrs. Bellamy's room, which was unoccupied now, though a bright fire was blazing in the chimney and a candle burning on a small stand near the hearth. Cora went to the large mirror and arranged her shining hair. She thought she saw the gloomy shadow of Hannibal behind her, and turned round once or twice before she could remove the impression.

"Poor fellow!" said she, still gazing on her own bright figure. "I do pity him. If King loved anybody else, I should feel *so* bad. I really believe I should poison myself. Now *aint* he handsome? and doesn't he look like a rose among thorns? Oh, get along, Cora; how like a fool you do talk!"

Cora's white teeth gleamed on the face of the mirror, then turning away she threw herself into a large easy-chair in front of the fire, and in spite of the excited state of her feelings and the extreme want of sentiment evinced by the act, she fell asleep in her downy nest. She had been up almost all the preceding night, on her feet all day, and had been dancing with such extraordinary enthusiasm, that the soft cushion and gentle warmth of the room soothed her to instantaneous repose. How long she slept she knew not. She was awakened by a sense of heat and suffocation, as if her lungs were turned to fire. Starting up she found herself encircled by a blaze of light, that seemed to emanate from her own body. Her light dress was one sheet of flame, the chair she left was enveloped in the same destroying element.

"Mercy! mercy!" she shrieked. "Oh! mistress, save me, save me." Rushing through the hall and down the stairs, the flames flashing more wildly round her, she still screamed, "Mistress, save me!" Mrs. Bellamy, who was in the room below, heard the sudden terrible cry of human suffering, and flew to relieve it. When she beheld the blazing figure leaping towards the open door, and recognised the voice of Cora, shrill and piercing as it now was, regardless of self, she sprang after her, and seizing her with frenzied grasp, tried to crush the flames with her slender fingers, and smother them against her own body. While she was thus heroically endeavouring to save the beautiful mulatto at the risk of her own life, Hannibal, who had dragged the carpet from the hall, wrapped it closely round the form of her he so madly loved; feeling even in that moment of horror a fierce transport that he had anticipated the bridegroom in this act of preservation. The flames, which were communicated to Mrs. Bellamy's dress, which being of black satin was not of very inflammable materials, were smothered by the contact of the thick carpet. Resigning Cora to the powerful arms of Hannibal, who bore her into the house, she followed her, unconscious, in her intense excitement and anxiety, of the injury she had herself sustained. Mr. Bellamy, who was looking into the ball-room when Cora's wild cry summoned her mistress to her aid, met his wife on the threshold, who, even while she held up her burnt and bleeding hands, exclaimed with white and blistering lips:—

"See to Cora. Oh! husband, look to her. I am not hurt."

"My God! Isabel, those hands! What have you been doing?"

"Cora is burned to death," she gasped, reeling against him as she spoke. "Think not of me. Poor Cora!"

While this self-sacrificing and heroic woman endeavoured to direct even her husband's attention to the chief sufferer in this awful scene, Cora was surrounded by a dense and bewailing crowd. She was not *burned to death*, as her mistress had said, but death would have been a mercy to the life of suffering

that remained to her. Poor King! the late proud, happy, smiling bridegroom. He threw himself by her side with frantic agony, sobbing and wringing his hands, and calling piteously on her name. Hannibal stood near, making no loud demonstration of grief, the big drops rolling silently down his cheeks. There was a lurid fire in his eye when he looked at King, indicating a kind of savage joy in *his* sufferings, mingled with his anguish for *hers*.

"I'll let him live now," muttered he to himself. "I 'fraid I would a killed him. He suffer now, poor fellow. He suffer now, that he does."

It was some time before Doctor Manning, the physician of the family, could reach Hickory Hill, as he dwelt several miles distant. In the mean time, Aunt Milly, who was famous for the cure of burns, took the poor girl under her care, and did all she could for her relief by taking off the burned cinders of her dress, and wrapping folds of cotton around her. She also wrapped up Mrs. Bellamy's bleeding hands, while Katy stood sobbing by her side. It was a terrible winding up of the bridal festivities. While Cora was nodding in the easy-chair, a portion of her light dress had come in contact with the candle burning on the table, and she thus became a blazing martyr to one moment's self-indulgence. She was fearing the dark jealousy of Hannibal. She thought not of the winding-sheet of flame the hand of destiny was weaving in exchange for her bridal robes. How seldom do the evils we most dread roll down upon our souls! How often are we crushed by a sudden, startling, unlooked-for weight of wo!

It was past midnight before Doctor Manning arrived, whose arrival was anticipated with unutterable anxiety. Mrs. Bellamy sat in an easy-chair by the couch on which the moaning bride was laid. Her bandaged hands lay upon a pillow, and her pale countenance was expressive of the deepest suffering.

"Not me, doctor," said she, looking towards the couch; "attend to poor Cora first; my sufferings are nothing to hers, nothing."

Feeling the truth of her remark, while he honoured her disinterested compassion, the doctor obeyed her, and turned to the patient, whose moans and cries indicated a degree of pain which he feared his utmost skill would be unable to relieve. It was a harrowing task to examine the extent of the injuries she had received, nor was it possible for him to pronounce at once upon the probability of her recovery. So strong was her solicitude to know his opinion of Cora's case, that Mrs. Bellamy forgot her own, and fixed her eyes upon him with a look of earnest inquiry. She saw that a cloud, deeper than seriousness, rested on his fine countenance, and her heart failed.

"You think her case very bad, doctor?"

"She is, indeed, very badly, deeply burned."

"But there is hope, doctor? You have cured such dreadful cases?"

"I do not say that this *is* hopeless; and be assured all that I *can* do shall be done to mitigate her sufferings and promote her recovery. But, my dear madam, when are you going to let me see those hands of yours you keep so carefully concealed?"

"How willingly would I endure this, and far more, if by so doing I could purchase the life of Cora!" said Mrs. Bellamy, while they unbound her smarting, raw, and disfigured hands. But never in their native fairness, when uncovered and sparkling with rings, had they been so worthy of admiration as at this moment, marred as they were in her generous efforts to save the life of her slave. So Doctor Manning thought, as with gentle touch and well-tried skill he applied the healing remedies of his art to the sore and quivering flesh. He had a soul keenly susceptible of the influence of moral beauty, and as his profession brought him within those sanctuaries of the heart to which very few are admitted, he had an opportunity of studying its most hidden pages.

"Your scars will be more honourable than those of the warrior's, gained on the battle-field," said he to Mrs. Bellamy, when he had dressed the martyred members.

"I do not deserve any praise, doctor. It was all instinctive."

"But surely, the instinct of benevolence that induces one to peril her life regardlessly for another, is more praiseworthy than the self-love that folds the mantle of security over its own breast, believing that self-preservation is the first great law of being."

After administering an anodyne to both, the doctor took his leave, promising to call the next day, or rather the same, for the dawn was already standing at the gates of the orient. At the outer door he was stopped by the bridegroom, who could scarcely articulate the question that trembled on his lips.

"She won't die, doctor, will she? Cora won't die?" repeated he, hanging on his words as if his own existence depended on the answer.

"I hope not, my poor fellow," said the doctor, in a kind and sympathizing tone. "It is impossible for me to say now what will be the result, but we will certainly hope for the best. In the mean time, I will do all I can to restore her."

"I know you will, doctor," said he, still detaining him. "They say you kill or cure, just which you please. Promise to cure Cora, and I'll follow you on my knees all my born days."

"You must pray to God for her life, and that He will bless the means used for her recovery; but you must not put *me* in the place of the Almighty," said the doctor, gently drawing away from the despairing bridegroom, and riding from the door.

"Yes," mused the benevolent physician, as he went forth into the faint, chill morning twilight; "the words this poor negro has uttered in his ignorance and despair are but the echoed breathings of suffering humanity. In the hour of physical anguish and impending bereavement, imploring Nature turns to *us*, and prays us, in God's stead, to succour and to save. If our feeble arm does arrest the stroke of the destroying angel, some grateful hearts invoke Heaven's blessing on our head; but if human science be baffled, and inexorable death claim his victim, then the frantic mourner cries, 'We might have saved them if we would,' and the mocking cynic exclaims, when the hearse rolls darkly on to the land of ever-

lasting silence, 'There goes one of the doctor's patients to his long home.' Verily, there are thorns among the roses that blossom on the wayside of our existence."

It is probable the reflections of Doctor Manning would not have assumed the character they did, had he indulged any sanguine hopes of the recovery of his patient. Days, even weeks passed away, and all his skill and kindness availed not. Poor Cora's doom was sealed. Mrs. Bellamy had recovered the use of her hands, and assisted in nursing the dying mulatto. So great and protracted had been her sufferings, that even King was willing that she should die, rather than live longer in hopeless anguish. At first Cora clung to life with strong, convulsive grasp, and would entreat the doctor, with pitying accents, "Not to let her die," but gradually the convulsive grasp relaxed, the wild glance of despair melted into the softness of tears, and she begged her mistress to pray that she might be made willing to die. Holy were the prayers that went up by her bedside for the boon of Christian resignation, and they were not breathed in vain. The same gentle hand that had embraced the flames for her rescue led her, a trembling, but accepted penitent, to the feet of her Saviour.

It seemed as if the blazing element that had consumed the springs of her existence was touched by the beauty of her face. No defacing mark was there, but her cheek remained as smooth and transparent as when it blushed beneath the bridal kiss. Just before she died, she turned her eyes in all their languishing brightness towards her mistress, who bent over her to catch her faint, low accents.

"Let me kiss once more the dear hands that suffered for me," said the expiring mulatto; and her weeping mistress softly pressed her hand on the cold lips, once red and bright as the coral of the ocean.

There is a plain white slab in a green enclosure on Hickory Hill, sacred to the memory of Cora. There are sweet flowers and shrubs blooming around it. The mourning bridegroom of an hour planted a weeping-willow by its side, and many a

night, when the moon was shining on her grave, the tall, dark form of Hannibal would wander to the spot, certain that he met there the spirit of Cora, and that she looked kindly upon him. Indeed, all the negroes on the plantation saw her ghost, and it was always dressed like a bride, in white muslin, white roses, and white kid gloves.

One incident connected with the history of the doomed bride should not be omitted here.

A short time after her death, Hannibal fell sick, and Doctor Manning was summoned to his bedside. He had attended him the previous year during his illness, and Hannibal had a grateful remembrance of his kindness and an unbounded admiration for his skill.

One night, when the General's fever was unusually high, and he began to have some fears for his own safety, he requested to be left entirely alone with the doctor.

"Doctor," said he, "do you think I going to die this time?"

"I hope not, General; you don't look like a dying man yet."

"But I may die for all that, and I wants to tell you something, if you please, Doctor, 'cause I knows I ought to confess it. 'Spose a man wants to kill a man, and don't do it, taint murder; is it, doctor?"

"If he would do it if he could, he commits murder in his heart, General."

"O Lord," cried Hannibal, rolling his hot head from side to side on the bolster. "O Lord, I would a killed King, if I could, 'fore poor Cora got burned to cinders; I didn't think of nothing else, Doctor."

"But you have repented since," said the doctor, trying to soothe the excited conscience of his patient; "you would not do it now."

"O Lord, no; I so sorry for him; I wouldn't hurt his little finger for him. I repented ever since; I keep repenting long I live."

"Then I doubt not you are forgiven by Him you have

offended. But keep quiet, General, or I never shall be able to cure you."

"I quiet now, I confess it, I make clean breast this time," said the negro, submitting to the will of his medical adviser, whom he had invested for the time with sacerdotal power.

Hannibal recovered, and became the devoted friend of the widowed King.

CHAPTER VI.

"The youth
Proceeds the paths of science to explore,
And now, expanded to the beams of truth,
New energies and charms unknown before,
His mind discloses." BEATTIE.

"She had hair as deeply black
As the cloud of thunder;
She had brows so beautiful
And dark eyes flashing under.
Bright and witty *Southern* girl!
Beside a mountain's water,
I found her, whom a king himself
Would proudly call his daughter."
MARY HOWITT.

THE life of a youth in college is full of monotony. One day is an epitome of the year. If he be ardent and ambitious; if his lip thirst for the dews of Castaly, and his spirit for the groves of Academus, he may, like Marcus, forget the realities of his condition, in the classic life of his mind. Such was his thirst for knowledge, and the rapture with which he imbibed it, that it was a perennial spring flowing inward and giving perpetual freshness and greenness to the intellectual and moral region. He loved to embosom himself in the thick oaken wood that surrounded the university; and while he felt the verdure of its eternal youth in his own soul, he drank in the almost divine philosophy of Plato, and wandered with him in shades deep and luxuriant as his own. If in his rambles he met some bubbling spring, he found inspiration in its waters, by associating them with the fountains of Parnassus and the virgin Castalidas, who drank of their waves.

Had Marcus isolated himself from his fellow-students during their hours of recreation, they might have envied his superiority; but he mingled in their sports with such hearty good-will, that he soon exercised over them the same rare personal influence he had done on others. Though his fellowship with all was kind and courteous, there was only one with whom he had intimate and unreserved communion. This was a youth, by the name of George Delaval, who, after Marcus had been in college a few weeks, evidently sought him out by that principle of elective affinity by which things entirely different are attracted towards each other. Delaval was a gay, dashing, don't-care-for-any-thing kind of young man, generous to prodigality, proud, and sometimes overbearing, but with a flow of animal spirits that made him exceedingly popular as a social companion. That he was very wealthy there was no doubt, for he spilled his money like grains of sand, regardless where it fell. Knowing his reputed riches and proud though reckless character, Marcus would never have manifested a desire for his acquaintance; but when Delaval showed him the flattering distinction of seeking his society on many occasions, Marcus, with the natural frankness and geniality of youth, opened his heart to his advances, and soon conceived for him a warm attachment. He had never forgot the brunette of the fountain, and in a moment of confidence he described the meeting to Delaval, and his extreme desire to ascertain the name of the dark little enchantress. Delaval seemed excessively amused by the description and the impression she had made on the imagination of Marcus.

"I dare say she is some bold little vixen, that would flirt her riding-whip over your shoulders with as much grace as she splashed about the water, if she had a chance," said Delaval. "I don't think I should like her at all. I have no taste for these dark beauties; give me one of your fair, blue-eyed, gentle lassies, that steal upon you as insensibly as the dawning light. I have no idea of ever being taken by storm."

Marcus could not help thinking of his gentle, violet-eyed

Katy, while listening to the description of Delaval, whose flashing black eyes mocked the lustre and the hue of jet. He frequently regretted afterward that he had mentioned the young incognita to his friend, for Mademoiselle Lightning became his standing jest, and Marcus felt as if he had wronged her, by exposing her to such light ridicule. He might never see her again—indeed he feared he should not; but her image was traced on his memory, in characters as vivid and thrilling as the lightning, whose name she had sportively assumed.

One evening, as he sat in the recitation-room, waiting for his turn to be called up by the learned professor, and was carelessly turning over the leaves of a book he had carried with him, a letter dropped to the floor. He took it up, supposing it one from his sister that he had accidentally left there, for he perceived that the direction was in a fair, feminine hand; but upon nearer inspection he saw that a stranger must have traced it, and the paper was of a most delicate, transparent tissue, scented with the attar of roses. He looked at the seal, whose device was a kneeling figure, with lightning darting from a cloud into its breast; the motto, *La Lampeggia degli occhi.* With kindling curiosity he opened the envelope, and glancing at the signature, beheld the single word, "Lightning." With a burning blush he folded it hastily, and concealed it again within the leaves of his book, reserving its perusal for the solitude of the thicket. Delaval, who had observed the fallen note, the deep blush, and hurried concealment of the paper, rallied him the moment he had left the recitation room, and insisted upon seeing the mysterious envelope.

"Acknowledge, Delaval," said he, "that it is a practical joke of your own, and I will forgive you. You must have written this yourself to impose on my credulity, though I acknowledge you are a greater master of penmanship than I ever imagined you." Marcus here exhibited the beautiful and fairy-like superscription of the letter, and again repeated to Delaval his awakened suspicion.

"No, Warland," replied Delaval, in a more serious tone than

he usually used, "I never wrote that letter. I may sport in words to amuse a passing moment; but I think you ought to know me better than to suppose I would be guilty of such a silly girl's trick as you accuse me of."

"Nay, be not angry," said Marcus. "We college boys do so many foolish things, we ought never to be offended at any charge. It is certainly very mysterious, very surprising. I never mentioned her to any one but yourself. How it came within the leaves of my book I cannot divine; unless," he added, "if you did not write the letter, you acted the part of the carrier-dove, and dropped it from your wings into my book. I am sure it is a very innocent jest, and I forgive you for it."

"I will accept your forgiveness when I have earned it, Warland, by playing the foolish part you see fit to have assigned me," answered Delaval, in a somewhat haughty and offended tone; "you must think yourself of more consequence than you are authorized, to imagine that *I* should trouble myself about such a wild-goose fancy. Is it what you would expect from me, Warland?"

"No, Delaval," answered Marcus, with a candid blush; "I must again ask you to excuse my charging you with an office so idle, on the plea of my extreme bewilderment. I am convinced now, that *you* have had nothing to do with it; then who could have been the bearer?"

"Well, Warland, if you are a brilliant scholar and a blithe companion, you are withal the most stupid fellow I ever beheld, to prate about the why and the how the letter of a young lady came into your possession, without having interest enough to peruse its contents. If I were the favoured mortal, I should have torn the paper into inch pieces before this, in my fiery impatience."

"Its contents are sacred, whatever they may be, from boyish levity. You will excuse me for reading them alone." The accents of grave rebuke that fell from the lips of Marcus were drowned in the gush of laughter that followed them, from his wild companion. Plunging into the thickest part of the

grove, and feeling himself alone with nature, he unfolded again the mysterious letter, and no longer doubted its genuineness.

"MASTER MARCUS WARLAND—As the lightning darteth from the east, and shineth unto the west, and thou knowest not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth," began his unknown correspondent, "so do the electric rays of thought, flashing from one mind to another, instantaneously traverse intervening space, though mountains may rise, and oceans roll between. Compare me not, I pray thee, to the destroying bolt, that furrows the black storm-cloud with its burning ploughshare, but to those lambent fires that sport harmlessly round the evening horizon, brilliant but innocuous. Thou art ambitious. Well, be it so. Ambition is a glorious passion in a man. Foolish girl that I am—I am ambitious too. Were I a boy, I would climb the Jura peaks of literature, nor stop till I reached the sun-clad summit of Mont Blanc. No yawning chasms beneath could appal me—no glacial heights above deter me from ascending. Thou wilt win the highest honours offered to the candidate of classic fame. Aspiring youth!—who can dare all, and attain all. Such is thy own bold language. But knowest thou not, that there are some things beyond the reach of human ambition, all lofty and glorious as it is? Canst thou catch the lightning's chain, and imprison it in thy grasp, even when it plays around thy fingers, and scintillates before thine eyes? Thou wonderest why I address thee. Thou wonderest how these random rays have glanced into the pages of thy book. Seek not to know, for thou canst not discover. As well mightest thou attempt to separate the drops I scattered over thy hyacinthine locks from the waters of the fountain; as well mightest thou seek to stay the vanishing tints of the rainbow, when the cloud fades away, as to tell whence I come, and whither I go. Press on, Marcus Warland, with thine eye steadfastly fixed on those victorious honours thou so proudly claimest; and though perchance invisible to thee, I shall be there to behold thee when they twine the laurel garland round thy brow. LIGHTNING."

Spellbound over the magic lines, which he again and again perused, the boy sat, unconscious of the sinking of the sun or the gathering of the night-shades. The letter was from her, the electric girl of the fountain, for to no one but her had he uttered the presumptuous words, "He could dare all, and attain all." To no one but her had he boasted of the prize he was resolved to win. She had remembered him—she had winged her thoughts to him, how he knew not—either by the sunbeams of heaven or the spirits of the air, or by some invisible wire strung from her heart to his. A mantling glow of delight suffused his whole being. There was a romance, a mystery in the matter that charmed and excited him. She was henceforth the Egeria of his destiny, who was to lead him on to glory and renown. He placed the letter in his bosom, where it was warmed by the pulsations of his quickened heart; and warned by the loud ringing of the bell, returned to his lodgings.

"Well, do you think I am the father of that precious morceau now?" asked Delaval, in a mocking voice.

"No, I do not, Delaval. It is impossible you should have written it."

"You will, of course, indulge me with a perusal," added Delaval, holding out his hand with a careless confidence that the request would be granted.

"Though there is nothing in the letter that an angel might not have penned, the lines traced by a female hand, when the motive seems as pure as actuates the writer of these, should be sacred from the gaze of curiosity. Even if it be mere girlish whim, as doubtless it is, in my keeping it should be considered holy."

"You are right, Warland. You have the true spirit of a knight. Why, what an admirable Crichton you are! The vaunted Scot revives again in you."

"I have no desire to emulate his fame," said Marcus, "to have the bale-fire of envy scorching my two clustering laurels, and to perish at last by the dagger of the midnight assassin."

"You *are* a second Crichton," persisted Delaval, "and I have no doubt you will be poniarded one of these days. You had better wear a coat of mail under your garments."

"I will, if it will shield me from the shafts of ridicule," answered Marcus, with rising anger.

"Ridicule!" exclaimed Delaval, grasping his hand and shaking it vehemently. "By the shade of Cicero, I never was more serious in my life. You have the prospect of making a great many enemies; but as true as there is a silver moon in yonder sky, you have one true and sincere friend."

Marcus believed so. It was impossible to doubt the truth of Delaval, when he spoke with seriousness. Marcus was morbidly sensitive to the idea of flattery. He could not bear to be complimented on his personal beauty. He courted the tanning sun and the darkening wind, but his cheek *would* be fair. He tried to keep down the rich waves of his curling hair, but they *would* wander around his brow. Some ventured to call him the "Lady of the College," as they did Milton in former days, who was also distinguished for the sunny rimples of his flowing locks. Once, as he was passing through the grove, he heard a jesting voice behind the trees, address him by this, to him, unspeakably odious title. The dazzling defiance of the eye, the breathing scorn of the lip warned the offender that man's proudest, loftiest spirit dwelt in that youthful bosom; and that he could not be insulted with impunity, as his athletic feats in the gymnasium well showed.

It was a great mortification to Marcus that he could not answer the letter of the young incognita. He knew not to whom or where to address a reply; and baffled on every side, he chafed with impatience under a mystery he could not unravel. But though he could not address his excited thoughts to her who was now the inspiration of his ambitious hopes, he threw them on paper, in the solitude of his room, in glowing prose, or reckless numbers. One evening, after a most magnificent thunder-shower, he seized his pen and wrote the following lines:—

Oh! not for me the sunny ray
That gilds the day-god's noonday throne,
Nor yet the moonbeam's silvery play
On quiet bower and streamlet lone.

Be mine the *lightning's* arrowy gleam,
Though death be lurking in its dart,
I'd lurk beneath the scorching beam,
And bind it burning to my heart.

I'll climb the mountain steep of fame
And round my brow its laurels twine;
'Tis but to grasp the electric flame,
And make its radiant glories mine.

I care not if the bolt consume
The daring hands that mock its power,
Love shall the sacrifice illume,
And triumph crown life's latest hour.

Throwing down his pen and extinguishing his light, he sat in the window till a late hour, watching the play of the electricity on the retreating vapours, flashing from cloud to cloud like fiery shuttlecocks tossed by invisible hands across the firmament. It was not till after his hurried return from prayers the following morning, that he remembered the impassioned strains he had left upon the table. He looked for them, but they were gone. He turned every book upside down and fluttered every leaf, but in vain. He emptied his portfolio, but with no better success. The same invisible hand that had borne him the mysterious letter had probably spirited away his bold stanzas. For one moment he was tempted to believe in the supernatural, and that the dark, bright nymph of the fountain was really embodied lightning, who made the clouds her chariot, and whose steeds were the wings of the wind.

It was not till after his return from Bellamy Place, where he passed the summer vacation, that he heard again from the incognita. In the delight of meeting once more his beloved benefactors, his lovely sister, and faithful nurse, he had thought less of his romantic correspondent; and even on his return her image was secondary in his mind. He was not to visit Bellamy Place again till his graduation, when Mr. and Mrs. Bellamy, accompanied by Katy, were to come themselves, to escort him home. Marcus had not forgotten the ruby ring, the parting

gift of his benefactress; and not a day passed that he did not gaze upon its sparkling crimson, and renew the vow he had breathed in the ferryman's hut and on the margin of the Long Moss Spring.

The morning after his arrival, as he approached the table, where many a ponderous tome was laid, he perceived the fragrance of roses in the atmosphere, and looking down beheld the same delicate tissue directed to him by the same fairy hand. This time the device on the seal was an eagle grasping a thunderbolt in its talons, the motto, *Je vaincs ou je meurs.*

"I wrote for the amusement of an idle hour," resumed the singular sprite. "I wrote because the bold promptings of your ambition corresponded so well to the eagle flights of my own wild spirit. I did not think you were weak enough to prate about *love*, that silly jest of the school-boy, that time-worn theme of the brain-sick bard. You have taught me my folly in supposing you above the rest of your kind. Climb the mountain steep, twine the laurels round your brow, but beware of that electric flame your rash hands would vainly grasp. Farewell; this is the last time the nymph of the fountain will breathe her accents in your ear. The wild impulse that guided her pen may be deemed bold and unfeminine by those who understand her not.

"Attempt to grasp the lightning's chain
And bind it burning round thy brain,
The fiery garland will not prove
More evanescent than thy love.

Man's vows upon the sand are traced,
By every passing wind effaced;
That wind doth not more idly rove,
More coldly sport, than human love.

Oh! rather be the waves my stay,
The cloud on which the lightnings play,
The summer gales that idly rove,
And coldly change, than human love.

LIGHTNING."

This was indeed her last communication. In vain he poured out his soul in flowing numbers and in flashing sentences; no fairy messenger bore them to her who inspired; no rose-

scented epistles hereafter diffused around his room the balmy breath of Paradise.

The time drew near when the honours of graduation were to be distributed, and when it was announced that Marcus had won the *first*, the intelligence was received with acclamations. The second was awarded to Delaval, whose popularity was manifested in a similar manner. Marcus was not elated by his success—a success so easily attained. He felt within him capabilities to win so much more exalted honours, that this seemed but boy's sport to him. Still, when Mr. and Mrs. Bellamy arrived, and warmly congratulated him and Katy, now a most lovely and interesting girl of seventeen years, with a cheek fair as the magnolia's waxen petals, and eyes whose modest violets still sought the ground, but looked up to him with such rejoicing pride, he could not but exult a little for their sakes in the distinction allotted him.

Delaval, too generous to cherish envy, was perfectly satisfied with the position assigned to himself, and certainly divided with Marcus the laurels of the day.

The night before commencement, while Delaval was sitting with Marcus and his friends, enlivening them with his gay and graceful nonsense, he was called out by a servant. Returning to make his apology for departing, he said to Marcus at the door:

"Some friends of mine are arrived. Distant acquaintances, perhaps, still they claim some politeness from me, and I may not see you till we meet before the *Professores illustrissimi, doctissimi*, who are to sit sublimely round us, with their black robes and solemn faces."

Marcus, whose part being first in honour, was last in time, felt at leisure to survey the throng that had gathered in the hall, till it was crowded to overflowing. Amid the brilliant array of beauty that beamed upon his gaze, the pure, sweet face of his sister shone with transcendent loveliness. Dressed in unadorned white, the fitting attire of virgin innocence, she sought no eye but her brother's, though many an admiring glance was levelled at her.

"*She* is not here," said Marcus to himself, "that strange, capricious being, who for a while made me her plaything. I am glad of it. She might perchance talk to me even as she wrote, to beguile an idle hour; and if I presumed to measure with her her own bright weapons, she would curl her saucy lips, wave her haughty hand, and remind me of the reverence due to her imperial little highness."

Why did Marcus arrest these rather ungrateful thoughts, and bend forward with a quickened pulse and a heightened colour? The crowd fell back from the door, and leaning on the arm of a very dignified gentleman, appeared the brunette of the fountain—the capricious incognita—the fairy of the pen. He recognised at one glance, the dark, resplendent countenance of the embodied *Lightning*, and so great was his excitement, that had it been his turn to speak, he could not have uttered one syllable. She looked taller and less slight, though not above the medium height, and her whole costume exhibited the exuberance of wealth and the redundance of fashion. There was a sparkling of jewelry about her neck and arms that reminded one of the starry adornments of evening, and a glitter of black, shining ringlets on her cheeks and shoulders that threw back the sunbeams which followed in her track as she moved from the door. Delaval had just risen to make the salutatory address as this brilliant vision passed along, and had scarcely made his low obeisance to the various dignitaries of the college when she took her seat. Marcus noticed that her eye was eagerly turned towards the speaker, and that she said something to her dignified companion, which also directed *his* attention to Delaval, and that they both listened with marked attention to his animated elocution. The only thing that gave to the face of Delaval the character of beauty, was a pair of very expressive black eyes; and he did not excel in those light graces of oratory which captivate the stranger's eye. His oration, though written in pure and beautiful Latin, Marcus hardly supposed Mademoiselle Lightning would understand. Yet, it was evident she was pleased with

his appearance, interested in his oratory, and when he concluded, an approving smile irradiated her countenance. Had she seen and recognised himself? Once he thought he felt her eyebeams burning on his own, and that a mocking smile flitted across her lips. Then she turned to the window near which she was seated, and played with the leaves that fluttered against her ringlets. Marcus by this time had recovered from the dazzling effect of this apparition, and resolved not to oppress her by the fixedness of his gaze. Should she meet him with haughtiness and repulsion, he could be as haughty and repelling as herself. He was not blinded by her wealth, nor awed by her state, nor would he be wounded by her caprice. What kind of recognition Marcus expected it would be difficult to tell. He could not be envious of the interest the very spirited and manly oration of Delaval had elicited from her. He was incapable of the meanness of envy. Was it jealousy? Very lofty and noble minds are sometimes misguided by its influence, and injustice is sure to follow in its train. When the exercises were suspended at noon he lost sight of her, while he sought his sister, who sat in another part of the hall. But while walking through the grove towards the president's house, where Mr. and Mrs. Bellamy were invited to dine, he saw his incognita considerably in advance, in company with her tall guardian, and Delaval was walking on the other side of her, evidently engaged in earnest conversation. How eagerly had he sought an introduction! how favourably had he been received! Remembering what he had said for his indifference to dark beauties, and his admiration for blondes, he could not help thinking that his own fair sister would be more likely to captivate his imagination than this dark-haired maiden.

During dinner he heard merry remarks made upon the bright young stranger, but no one seemed to know her name or locality. He also heard many encomiums passed on the talents and elocution of Delaval, which, in spite of the little twinge of jealousy he had caused, gave him sincere and heartfelt pleasure.

When they returned to the hall in the evening, Marcus beheld *Lightning* (for thus he was constrained to call her) already seated by the same window, whose shade-tree made beautiful lattice-work over the casement. She sat apart from the other ladies, evidently a stranger to all, and as evidently wishing to remain so. Once more he met her recognising glance, illumined by the same bright, haughty smile, and again the light leaves were broken off recklessly, and strewed upon the window-sill.

Before the commencement of the exercises, while the band was playing the inspiring national air of "Hail Columbia," Delaval came upon the platform and seated himself at his side.

"Why, Warland, Marcus Warland," said he, in his lowest tone, "do you not recognise your mysterious friend? Why have you not sought her, and acknowledged the signal honours she has conferred upon you?"

"I am sure you have more than supplied my place by the eagerness with which you have claimed an introduction, and ingratiated yourself in her favour."

"Now, Marcus Warland, don't be jealous of me, I pray you. I knew this fair damsel before, and am only renewing an old acquaintance."

"You knew her, Delaval? Why was this kept so secret from me? It seems very inconsistent with your usual frankness."

"How, in the name of wonder, could I identify the enchantress of the fountain, whom you depicted in such oriental tints, with this very clever, but not at all beautiful brunette? And how could I be aware of her freak of calling herself by the odd name of Lightning?"

"How, indeed," said Marcus, laughing, and relieved by the frank, natural manner of Delaval. "I hope you will give me an introduction after we receive our diplomas, or rather *her*, for she has the advantage of me, and knows me by my proper patronymic already. What is her real name?"

"It is the most ridiculous thing in the world," cried Delaval, "but the little witch has made me promise not to reveal

her real name, and to introduce her by the strange soubriquet she has assumed. Only, with another of her unaccountable whims, she has Frenchified it to *L'éclair, le nom François* for Lightning. She is the most original, arbitrary, and self-willed of human beings; of this I give you fair warning. Accustomed to rule every one that comes within the circle of her influence, she is despotic as the autocrat of Russia. You will meet her at the ball to-night, given in honour of our illustrious class, where she and your beautiful sister will represent the brilliant night and fair aurora of the South."

"*You* do not seem to have bowed to her arbitrary sway yet?"

"No, indeed; I am too fond of dominion myself. I have told you of my belle ideal, and it does not resemble her. Do not, however, imagine that I think her destitute of fine qualities, because I speak frankly of her faults. She is generous, warm-hearted, and, I should think, capable of great sacrifice for those she loves."

The serious tone in which the last words were uttered, and the look of deep interest he cast towards the young brunette, who was sitting in an attitude of careless, inimitable grace, convinced Marcus that he felt for her a far greater admiration than he was willing to avow. The conversation ceased, for the youthful candidates for fame were already on the floor, in all the artificial glow of a forensic disputation. At length, all had performed their allotted parts but he who wore the crowning honour of the day. Marcus was not bashful, but he was modest. He had too much self-reliance to have a dread of failure, but the audible murmur of admiration that followed his graceful salutation brought the rushing blood to his cheek and bent his glances momentarily downward. The full, black, flowing silk robes of the students invested their persons with a kind of Roman dignity and grace while they were speaking, which their usual dress could not impart. Marcus, who was now nineteen, had the full height and proportions of manhood, and notwithstanding the fairness of his complexion and the almost girlish profusion of his sunbright hair, there was an air of

manliness and resolution, an expression of great mental power, combined with the warmth of latent passion breathing in his face, that redeemed it at once from the charge of effeminacy. He had that greatest of all charms in an orator, perhaps it might be said in *any* man or woman, a full, clear, sweet, and mellow voice, more deep than loud, and whose lowest tones could be distinctly heard in the remotest corner of the hall. Marcus felt that the approving, glistening eyes of his beloved benefactress and his revered benefactor were resting upon him; that his sister was gazing upon him with love and pride; that the venerable president and learned professors were bending upon him looks of beaming approbation. He felt all this, for his mind was clear from embarrassment, and he took in the scene, of which he was now the centre, in all its length and breadth and bearings. But there was something he felt even more. There was one face, that, like a burning-glass, seemed to draw all the rays of thought, all the emanations of feeling; and the figure to which that face belonged might have sat as a model to the statuary who wished to personify the genius of attention. Yes, the spell was upon her. With her head slightly raised, the wild foliage of her ringlets swept back from her brow, and the crimson bloom of excitement on her cheek, she followed every word of the youthful and inspiring orator, from his graceful exordium to the close of his splendid effort, in the midst of the most enthusiastic and reiterated bursts of applause. Marcus withdrew from the forum, but just as he was making his last bow, a hand, unseen in the dense crowd, threw a chaplet of evergreen at his feet. Bending down he raised this classic token of victorious honour, and twining it round his arm, instead of wreathing with it his glowing brow, he disappeared from the gaze of the audience. So signal a triumph had never been won in the walls of the university; and after the parchments were all distributed, and the students dismissed, his classmates gathered round him, and with the generous enthusiasm of youth, warmly congratulated him on his well-earned fame. Delaval, giving his hand a real *tourniquet*

squeeze, declared he was a "glorious fellow," and "an honour to the South." "And take my advice, Warland," added he, confidentially, "glorify yourself a little, and if a certain young witch should put on any airs to-night, deport yourself right royally; let her feel that you know your own value."

"He certainly feels a deep interest in that quarter," thought Marcus, but he said nothing. The sun was then but a crimson arc on the horizon, and he required rest before the hilarity of the evening commenced. The day had been sultry and oppressive, even in the open air, much more so in the crowded walls he had just quitted. But as usual in southern latitudes, a soft, cool breeze came stealing over the dewy grass, reviving the languid spirit, and preparing it for new enjoyment.

Marcus was emphatically the lion of the night, and whatever higher distinctions he attained in after life, he certainly looked back to this evening as the most brilliant epoch of his youth. He was not vain or elated. He has arrived at no eminence he had not fully expected to attain, for he had a full, rejoicing consciousness of his own powers, and he knew, if he kept them free from pollution, and healthy and vigorous from exercise, they were capable of any exertion he would be called upon to make. From earliest childhood, when asked if he could do any thing, the ready, unhesitating answer was, "I can." And the earnest purpose, the brave resolve, the firm yet modest confidence, were expressed in every feature of his face, in every movement of his form. It was this invincible self-reliance, this soul-felt strength, that gave an energy, a vitality and living warmth to his character, and diffused around him an atmosphere of light and joy. Never had Marcus known but one hour of despair, and that was the morning after his father's perjury, when he bowed his young head over the *Long Moss Spring*, and mingled his bitter tears with its waters. And then, when that father came, and, sitting down by him in penitence and humiliation, told him of his heaven-appointed mission, the magic words "*I can—I will*," rang like an ancient war-cry of victory in his ears, and led him on to a

triumphant future. The girl of the fountain had cast a bewildering influence over him, and for a little while he doubted his own power over elements so strange and apparently inharmonious as hers; but now, since he had seen *her* mind magnetized by *his*, swaying in his breath of eloquence, as the leafy branch in the rushing wind, when he repeated to himself the interrogation she herself had made, "Canst thou seize the lightning's chain, and imprison it in thy grasp?"—he could answer with the same conquering, unconquerable resolution, "I can—I will." L'éclair sat at the upper end of the hall, in the full blaze of the chandelier, and she well represented the night of "starry climes and cloudless skies." The style of her dress was more juvenile than that she had worn during the day, though more showy than the maidens that surrounded her. It was of some exquisitely-transparent texture, while the brilliant rubies on her neck and arms suited well the rich darkness of her complexion. Marcus immediately approached her, and requested her hand for the opening dance. He asked it with a smiling assurance of welcome, and certainly was not repulsed. So quickly the music commenced, and they were called upon to take their places on the floor, there was no embarrassing pause, after the first frank greeting. The head of the dance was yielded to Marcus, as a compliment to one whose initials were traced in green leaves, within an oaken garland, on the wall. Marcus excelled in the graceful art of dancing, and no nymph of the wood, no naiad of the stream, no muse of Parnassian bowers, ever possessed more of the music, the poetry, the eloquence of motion, than the wild and spirited L'éclair. Her movements seemed to flow into each other, like the moonlight waves, gently, undulatingly; yet one felt when gazing, that there was a bounding will, a latent strength, like those waves when driven by the storm. The same figure, that moved with such measured grace, obeying the mandates of music, might spring like the antelope, and fly like the deer, in the freedom of the forest and the plain.

When they stood at the foot of the dance, while the band

kept up their exhilarating strains, Marcus turned to his partner, who, instead of panting with flushed cheeks, as most of the young maidens did after their flight through the hall, appeared as calm and unwearied as a bird just lighted on a spray.

"Now let me thank you for the honour you have conferred upon me," said he—"an honour, I assure you, that has not been lightly prized."

"How can you consider that an honour," she carelessly answered, "which I should have been obliged to bestow on any young gentleman in the room, who first requested it?"

"I do not allude to the dance. I do not consider that in the light of an *honour*, but a *pleasure*. No young lady would have refused my hand; so if there be any *honour*, it is conferred on her who was selected first, in a group so fair as this."

"Really, fair sir, you seem to appreciate your attentions very highly. Do you imagine others attach to them the same value?"

"I think you would have been disappointed, if I had not sought the earliest opportunity of acknowledging my obligations to the inspiring genius of the fountain, to her who writes with the lightning's pen, and makes viewless messengers the vassals of her will."

"Thanks are oppressive when unmerited and undesired," she replied, assuming an air of haughty reserve. "You owe me no gratitude, for allowing me to make you the plaything of a reckless mood, in an hour of ennui and idleness."

"Believe me, bright L'éclair, you have found no plaything in me," answered Marcus, with a proud smile. "Young as I am, and little versed in the wiles and caprices of woman, I can parry her keenest weapons, and foil her most covert attacks." L'éclair turned quickly, and fixed her dazzling eyes upon his face, with a look of unutterable astonishment. He met it with such calm and radiant intensity, that, baffled and disconcerted, she exclaimed in a tone of vexation, "You are indeed an enigma. Give me the clue, if you please, to the intricate labyrinth of your mind."

"I will, for it is a very simple one—Truth."

"Who ever heard of a young man speaking of *truth* to a girl?"

"Who ever heard of a young girl requiring a key to the thoughts of one as frank and ingenuous as myself?"

"Well, I am going to test your frankness. Do you not think me very bold?"

"Shall I tell you what I think of you, without fear of giving displeasure, even if it be an affirmative to your singular question?"

"Certainly; I should like exceedingly to know your opinion of me, though it is a matter of perfect indifference what it is."

"Is it? Then I shall not tell you."

"Really!" she cried, with a smile of inconceivable brightness; "I do think I have found a spirit as haughty and unmanageable as my own. Well then, victor orator of the day and most provokingly self-sufficient young man, I do care to know what you think of me, good, bad, or indifferent."

"Let us sit down by the pine boughs that luxuriate in this corner of the room, leaving the floor for the present to others. You have given me a long task to perform."

With an assenting motion, she suffered Marcus to lead her to the mimic bower, where, with mock gravity on her brow and arch defiance on her lips, she waited his exposition of her character.

"I need not tell you that you are young, beautiful, and fascinating," began Marcus, with an air of graceful seriousness. "*That* you know but too well already. That you have wit and genius you also know, and are fully aware of their dazzling power. Added to these lavish gifts of nature, you have the splendid endowments of wealth, which in the eyes of the world would gild with transcendent brightness far meaner charms These are the brilliant lights of the picture—now for its coun ter shades."

"Yes! give me the shades. I have listened with impatience to an enumeration of advantages too highly coloured for the sober truth you promised."

"Nay, mysterious damsel, no tint that ever glowed on the palette of the artist ever gave a hue too bright for the *lights* I

have endeavoured to flash upon your perception. But when I tell you that you *presume* upon these matchless gifts, and wear them, not as their grateful recipient, but as their arbitrary possessor; that you feel born to rule rather than to win; that you glory in your power, rather than rejoice in your attractions, you may call me a precocious cynic and presumptuous censor, if you will, yet I am nevertheless your best and truest friend."

L'éclair listened with her eyes riveted upon the floor, and the colour of her cheek heightened till it shamed the ruby gems she wore. He paused as if waiting for a reply, but as still she sat with downward glance, he added:

"You are not angry, I trust, that I have obeyed your behest?"

She raised her eyes instantaneously, and he saw with surprise and emotion that their dark surface was glistening with moisture that gave them the softness of velvet.

"Angry!" repeated she, in a low, sweet voice. "Oh, no! I am pleased, delighted. You are the first person that ever addressed to me the language of truth—except one," she added, and Marcus thought she glanced towards Delaval, who was dancing with Katy, but who occasionally looked towards them with undisguised interest—"except one, and he always does it mockingly. A petted child; an only daughter; a spoiled and pampered heiress, how could I help being self-willed and wayward? When I met you at the fountain, I thought you a mere boy—no older than myself. Pray, how old do you take me to be, Master Marcus Warland?" said she, with a dash of the returning hoyden in her manner.

"Say seventeen summers bloom upon your cheek," said he, comparing her with his sister, whose fair figure was gliding near.

"You must be a magician, for just so many years I have numbered. Now I find you with such a majestic earnestness added to years, you are really awe-inspiring. When I look you in the face, I can well believe you no more than nineteen; but judging from your words, I should suppose you at least ninety-and-nine."

"I am glad you clothe me with such venerable associations,"

said Marcus, laughing. "You will at least think of me with respect."

"I should think that would be the last feeling so young a man would wish to inspire."

"Shall I tell you the first?"

"Yes—though I dare say I shall repent my condescension."

"It is confidence."

L'éclair bit her ruby lips, to hide its pouting expression. She would not for worlds show that she was disappointed in the answer, but she certainly expected a different one.

"Let me for one moment refer to a subject that I cannot dismiss from my thought," said Marcus, with all his natural, hearty, glowing manner,—"the influence of your mysteriously-winged epistles. I never thought the writer bold or unfeminine. I thought, and still think her a being of strong and generous impulse, and capable of great and glorious influences. Her mystic words have been my inspiration, and my security of success. I felt—I still feel, that she would not thus have written, had she not felt an interest in the aspiring boy whom destiny had thrown across her path. The dreams of his ambition are partly realized. He is climbing the Jura's billowy ridge, with his eye fixed upon the monarch mount, where the thunder dwells and the lightning makes its home."

It is impossible to describe the varying countenance of the brunette while Marcus was speaking. Now it sparkled with the dewy freshness of the morning; then a soft cloud floated over it; and when he concluded, the fire of a summer noonday flashed from its beams.

"How well—how clearly you have read me," said she. "How baffling, how triumphant you are. I came in the vain hope of finding amusement in your struggles to pierce through the mystery in which I have enveloped myself—to sport with your curiosity, and exult in my power. I find you armed on every side, as if you had a legion of archangels to contend with, instead of a weak and foolish girl. You have not even asked my name."

"None can be more beautiful than L'éclair. If you give me a thousand others, that alone shall breathe upon my lips."

"Well, be it so. I will still be L'éclair till you read me a very different character of myself from what you have done to-night. *Perhaps* I shall remember what you have said. *Perhaps* I shall make the wisdom of my venerable Mentor available for my good. But I should like to know before we again join the dance what you *do* admire in women, you have been so frank in telling me what there is to condemn."

"Do you see that lady, with pearls braided in her dark hair, with such a sweet, serene countenance, on whose cheek a mellower tint than that of youth's is spread."

"Yes, she is very lovely."

"That lady has a gentleness, firmness, and dignity, that so melt into each other, that you cannot tell where one begins and the other ends, any more than you can the blending colours of the rainbow. What I now am I owe to her. When I was a little boy, she kissed me with her angel lips, and infused into mine a portion of her divine spirit. She gave an inner sense of loveliness, an insight into my own nature, and an image of that other nature which I trust will one day blend with mine, and incorporate itself with my being of beings."

L'éclair's brilliant eyes were fixed on the charming face of Mrs. Bellamy with vivid admiration, when Delaval approached, and laying his hand on the shoulder of Marcus, exclaimed:

"Don't you see what dark frowns are gathering around you? They are crying out against you as a selfish monopolizer. There is many a bashful youth sighing for an introduction to Miss L'éclair, and begging me to intercede in their behalf."

"Excuse me, Delaval; I have no desire to extend my acquaintance."

"You would not draw upon yourself so odious a name as an *exclusive*," said he, with marked emphasis. She blushed, gave a haughty wave of the head, but rising at the same time and taking his arm. Marcus felt that he had extended their conver-

sation as far as politeness to others authorized. Delaval led L'éclair to the dance, and though he seemed charmed with the fair Aurora, as he called the blue-eyed Katy, his every look betrayed a strong and earnest interest in the dark girl, whose fascinations he defied. And she treated him with a playfulness and familiarity that seemed like the rebounding of an elastic substance from some strong unusual pressure.

"She probably looks upon me as a stern moralist," thought Marcus, as he saw her lay her hand confidingly on Delaval's arm and look up in his face with a bewitching smile, "but better so than the plaything of an idle hour. Nay, I will not be unjust. She bore my bold chiding nobly, and soft and beautiful was the inner light that at times came up from her soul and illumined her face. Brilliant, charming, bewildering L'éclair! Should she prove an ignis fatuus, shining over her marshes of folly and vanity, aimless and betraying, I could soon cease to be lured by her light; but if"——

The mental sentence remained unconcluded, for he had to turn L'éclair in the dance, and reflection vanished in a thrill of electricity.

When the dance was over and the company dispersing, he again found himself at her side.

"We leave by the morning's dawn," said she. "My uncle is a man of wondrous punctuality, and will not delay one moment. Delaval, who is bound for the same regions, will bear us company. Farewell, Marcus Warland. Promise not to think less of the wild girl of the fountain for daring to send you some of the random arrows of her reckless brain; and she hopes when she again meets you, she will be able to lay aside the fancy appellation of L'éclair for her own legitimate, baptismal name."

"I cannot promise to think *less* of one who will henceforth be blended with my highest aspirations and holiest wishes," exclaimed Marcus, with irrepressible enthusiasm. The soft hand extended in parting lingered a moment in his clasp, and she passed away like the lightning of a summer night.

CHAPTER VII.

"His fair locks waved in sunny play,
By a clear fountain's side,
Where jewel-colour'd pebbles lay
Beneath the flowing tide.
And if my heart had deem'd him fair,
When in the fountain glade,
A creature of the sky and air,
Almost on wings he play'd;
Oh! how much holier beauty now
Lit that young human being's brow!"—HEMANS.

DURING their journey home, Marcus expressed a strong desire to revisit the scenes of his childhood, the ferryman's cabin, the Long Moss Spring, old Simon, and the banks of the rushing river, that used to murmur his nightly lullaby. Mr. Bellamy immediately proposed to take his place in the carriage, in exchange for his horse, which would carry him by a by-road to his early home.

"I wish I were going too," exclaimed Katy, looking wistfully after him. "Marcus, don't forget to give my love to old Uncle Simon, and bring me some of the moss from the fountain, and some of the leaves of the magnolia that shades its margin."

It was with feelings of refreshment and delight that Marcus found himself on horseback in the heart of the cool green woods. Dear as was the society of his friends, just at this time the freedom of his own thoughts was dearer still. Freedom, yes; it was freedom. It was with a jubilant spirit he felt himself free from the collegiate restraints which for three years had bound him. They did not gall him while he wore them, because he never writhed or resisted them, but now they were thrown off he experienced that joy in independence which shows it is the birthright of man. He was happy; he had fulfilled the hopes of his friends; he had attained the reaching of his ambition; but the spot on which he now stood was only a stepping-place for another and loftier ascent. He looked

into the future. According to the promise of his adopted father, he was to enjoy still higher advantages of education in one of the distinguished institutions of New England, and he flew in imagination towards its granite hills, "of eagle hearts the eyrie," with eager anticipations. Delaval was to accompany him. He was to visit him at his own home, called Wood Lawn, after resting a while at Bellamy Place, and they were to start together on their northern journey. We said Marcus was happy. The mysterious joy of a young and growing passion exalted and refined all his perceptions, and even added to the visible glories of creation.

It was a little past noon of the third day since he had quitted the university, that the first incident occurred of any interest to the young traveller. He was just coming into the main road. He was riding on a grassy path, and the hoofs of his horse made no more noise than if treading on velvet. He saw through the opening boughs a carriage, standing near a little brook that flowed across the road. Seated on a log by the way-side, in the shade of the tall trees, was a group, whose position drove the warm blood from the cheek of Marcus, quickly and oppressively, to his heart. Mr. Alston, the uncle of L'éclair, was seated somewhat apart, near the end of the log, very much engaged in discussing a luncheon of cold turkey and ham. Delaval sat at the opposite end, his arm thrown caressingly round the waist of L'éclair, whose head reclined wearily, but gracefully, on his shoulder. Her bonnet was tossed on the ground, her hair was loose and sported wildly over Delaval's arm, as the forest vine round the oak to which it clings. An indescribable pang pierced the heart of Marcus, that heart a moment before so glad and glowing. The treachery of Delaval, who professed such indifference to L'éclair,—Delaval, whom he thought the mirror of truth and frankness; the levity and unmaidenly forwardness of L'éclair, in forcing herself on his thoughts, while she was cherishing an attachment to another;—he knew not which cut the deepest, the coldest. He could not accost them. Gently turning his horse, (if there

was a rustling motion among the leaves, it was drowned in the soft gurgles of the wimpling brook,) he rode back into the woods, without disturbing the noonday siesta of the travellers. As soon as he was far enough removed to be beyond the reach of discovery, he threw himself from his horse, and casting himself down under the first tree he saw, leaned back against the rough bark, immovable as the trunk that supported him. He felt as if he were suddenly transported from the equatorial to the polar regions, such a freezing sense of falsehood and deceit congealed his blood and turned his veins to icicles. Nor did he think of himself alone. He thought of his blue-eyed sister, listening as he had seen her to the artful compliments of Delaval, whose black eyes, riveted on her modest face, seemed to speak unutterable things. He thought of all this, and he execrated the heartless vanity that fed on the wounded confidence of others. L'éclair! ah, what a beautiful vision of girlish enthusiasm, pure and ardent impulses, true and generous feeling, what a promise of glorious womanhood were all swept away.

> "Oh! colder than the wind that freezes
> Founts that but now in sunshine play'd,
> Is that congealing pang which seizes
> The trusting bosom, when betray'd."

"Never again," thought the youth, when, after an hour's deep abstraction, he left the solitude of the woods, "shall I have undoubting faith in man or woman. Is the world made of elements like these? If it be, save me, my guardian angel, from its chilling contact."

Marcus slept that night in a rough hut, belonging to a woodman, for his delay had prevented him from reaching the usual stopping-place. He met with another obstruction, in being compelled to have his horse re-shod; so that he did not reach his old home till towards night on the following day. It was just such a quiet, mellow evening as when Mr. Bellamy rode up, the last time, the same path he was travelling. He saw the smoke of the chimney, lazily yet gracefully curling upward above the forest trees, before the low, dark walls met his view. The thoughts, feelings, and experience of nine years were all

crowded into one moment of time, and the heart of the young man was full. He had left that spot a boy, whom peculiar trials had invested with precocious energy of character,—he came, in the dawning of his manhood, crowned with classic laurels, to bathe his lip once more in that sacred fountain, where his father had been baptized with the waters of life. He dismounted and tied his horse to a well-known post, though now infirm, and leaning forward, like a decrepit old man. He saw the old ferry-boat, looking darker and heavier than ever, moored at the same place, the long propelling-poles crossed on the planking. But when a sudden curve in the path brought him within view of the spring, the Long Moss Spring, the waters all gilded and crimsoned by the reflected hues of summer's effulgent sunset—his soul heaved and glowed like those waters; and seated under the magnolia's shade, with his head supported by both hands, sat a figure old and bent, with bare grizzled wool, and a face whose hard wrinkles looked as if carved out of lignum vitæ, blackened by smoke. A threadbare, faded uniform coat, that coat of many memories, covered the shoulders of the old soldier, who sat on the brink of the fountain, watching the eternal flow of its waters, probably musing on the cherished images of past years. Marcus leaped forward and stood on the white stones that surrounded the basin, uttering a joyous cry. The old soldier lifted his dim eyes, and gazed upon the bright, sunny-locked, springing figure, that had arisen, like the young and radiant river-god, near the fountain of the virgin Arethusa.

"Simon—old Uncle Simon—old soldier," exclaimed Marcus, holding out his hand to the bewildered old man; "don't you know me? don't you remember Marcus, Marcus Warland, Aunt Milly's pet, and little Katy's brother?"

"The Lord save my ole eyes!—you don't say so!" said the negro, in a tremulous voice, slowly rising and gazing long on the youth, who was shaking his hard and ridgy hand with a true college gripe. "Mercy on me—I do believe it is—I do indeed —Heavenly Master, what a fine young man you got to be!

Bless my soul and body—if it isn't master Marcus! and he haint forgot poor old Simon—he haint—jist to think on't—bless his heart—I can now say with good ole Simeon, when he seed the promised land, 'Let thy servant depart—I live long enuff this time.' I've seed young master again—and he 'members poor old Simon."

By this time Uncle Simon had wrought himself up to the highest pitch of sensibility, and stopped, weeping and sobbing like a child.

"Forget you, Uncle Simon! no, indeed! How could you think me so ungrateful?—you, who were so kind and good to me when a boy? We all remember you, and wish you were with us again, wish you were with the excellent Mr. Bellamy."

"And Milly—bless the good ole soul!" cried the old soldier, his recollections fertilized and vivified by the copious shower that had watered them; "how is she? I never, never forget ole Milly; she mighty good to Simon. She used to talk Scripter, too, jist like a book. She mighty knowing woman, Milly was; and little mistress Katy—how she do? She 'member Uncle Simon, too? I tote her many a time to this here spring, and put her head all over in, every bit on't. She big lady now. She got sweetheart—hey, master?"

Simon gave Marcus a little punch in the side, and opening his mouth, let out one of his old-fashioned laughs, such as Milly used to echo. While he was thus recreating himself, Marcus stooped over the fountain and quaffed its cold, icy-cold stream. How beautiful the long moss waved, now deep sea-green, now deep sky-blue below! How white, how pure was the basin, smooth and spotless from the ceaseless lavation of the waters! How sparkling was the foam, how silvery the gush of the rill!—Ah! this was the spirit of the place! The old cabin was dilapidated, and inhabited by strangers; the grounds looked neglected; even the river seemed defaced by the dark old ferry-boat that lay sluggishly on its bosom; but this perennial spring, pure and fresh and clear, was a living,

singing, joyous being, the emblem of his own youth, the reservoir of memory, the birthplace of hope.

"Who inhabits the cabin, Simon?" asked Marcus. "It is in rather a ruinous condition."

"I forgit his name," said the old man. "He no quality folks like *your* family, young master; jist poor, no-account sort of people. I jist comes here, 'cause I can't live without it. I comes to sit about and think of ole times. Master don't make me work any more. I shan't live long, anyhow, young master. Ole Simon jist like a field of dry fodder—ready to be pull down and trodden in the oven; but if the Lord put me in the heavenly house up yonder, I no care how soon the scythe of the 'stroyer come, and hack away the ole black shuck."

Marcus sat with his old friend, talking of past times, till the gleam of sunset died on the fountain, and its cold, gray surface gave back the sober tints of twilight.

"Is the man who keeps the ferry at home?" asked Marcus.

"I don't knows, young master, but his wife be."

"I must ask her for a night's lodging. There are echoes in those walls to me, Uncle Simon, that will talk with me till midnight is gone by."

"Yes, young master, I does think it be haunted—'deed I does. I seed a sperrit myself go one night right round the house, with a white handkercher on, just like Milly. I 'fraid Milly going to die."

The woman coming out to dip a bucket of water from the spring, Marcus asked if she would give him a night's lodging. Though common-looking and coarsely dressed, she seemed to have a native sense of politeness and an innate love of the beautiful, for she looked at Marcus with evident admiration, and accorded him the boon he asked.

"You will have but a bad time of it, I can tell you," said she. "It is a poor place for the like of you to sleep in."

Marcus smiled, and followed her into the cabin, where he had so often slept the sound sleep of childhood. As he entered and looked round the dark, unplastered walls, and contrasted

them with the elegant rooms of Bellamy Place, he wondered if he ever could have breathed the air of contentment within those rough, unhewn logs. He had forgotten that it contained but one room, and apologized to the woman for his intrusion.

"Only lend me a blanket and pillow," said he, "and I can sleep gloriously on the white rock by the side of the fountain. The moon shines to-night, and the day has been very warm and sultry."

In vain the really hospitable woman insisted upon giving him her bed, and sleeping in the kitchen. Marcus would not have exchanged the bed he had chosen for a royal canopy. After a supper of bacon, fish, and corn hoe-cake, such as he had often partaken of with a much better relish, he begged her to deposit a blanket and pillow under the magnolia boughs, and calling to Simon, went to the ferry-boat, and jumping in, grasped one of the poles, and gave the other to him.

"Let us have a push over the river for the sake of auld lang syne, Uncle Simon. See, the moon is rising, rolling up, like a great silver wheel, out of the river. I long to see if I can do now what I did nine years ago."

While they were unfastening the chain that confined it to the shore, the woman came running from the cabin, quite breathless.

"What are you going to do with that boat, sir?"

"I forgot," said Marcus, laughing. "I forgot to ask permission. I only wanted to push it once across the river, and back again."

"I expect husband every instant, and I don't know what he would say if he found the boat t'other side, and he not in it."

"I leave my horse as a security that I will not run away with the boat," said Marcus, "and my hat and gloves too," added he, giving them a light toss into her hand.

"Oh! you had better keep on your gloves, I tell you, sir. Your hands look too white and delicate like to handle them dirty poles."

Marcus cast a disdainful glance at his fair hands. He

wished he could harden and embrown them, but it was not the life of a student that would do it.

"Perhaps you would jump in and go with us," said Marcus, observing that she looked doubtfully and wishfully on the river, "then you will not be anxious about the boat."

"Thankee, I don't care if I do," answered she with alacrity, and stepping in, she snatched the pole from the tremulous hand of Simon, and told Marcus she would help him to push it. She was young and active, and seemed to enjoy the sport keenly of seeing such a handsome young man, dressed so finely, pushing away lustily as a boatman. It was really a novel trio. Old Simon stood at the head of the boat, holding by the lantern-post, in his battered regimentals, looking like a militia ghost in the moonshine; the stout, sunburnt, but now bright-faced woman, brandishing her pole, and laughing merrily at the fair young man, whose hands gleamed so white on the black rod he was wielding, and whose magnificent hair glistened and waved like molten gold. Marcus, whose experience of the previous day had been weighing heavily, coldly on his heart, felt at this moment a wild gayety as foreign to his nature as the depression that had been sinking him. Old habits resumed their power. The water seemed his native element, and dashing his pole into the strong current till he threw a shower of wet diamonds on old Simon's snowy wool and the dishevelled locks of the ferryman's wife, he leaned back with all his strength, mirroring the moonbeams on his polished brow. When they reached the bank, Marcus beheld with astonishment a gentleman seated in an open buggy, waiting to cross. He had come down the hill while the boat was going over, but they were too much excited to notice him. Marcus could not help laughing at the singular appearance he must present to the eye of the stranger, but he had no alternative but to push back even as he had come, and finish the evening's frolic. The gentleman descended from his buggy as soon as he had driven into the boat, and looked at Marcus with evident curi-

osity and surprise. He was a young man, well-dressed, and carrying his head very loftily.

"Young master," said Uncle Simon, seeing Marcus take one hand from the pole and expose its palm to the night air, as if its coolness were refreshing, "you blistering your hands, you know you be. They tenderer now than they was when you little boy, and push, push most all the time. Lord bless me, jist to think you ever did do sich a thing afore, looking so like a born angel as you do."

Marcus felt his blood rush hotly to his face as he encountered the insolent stare of the young man at this reminiscence of Uncle Simon. It was Mr. Bellamy's wish, when he went to college, that he should never allude to his father's past history; that he should be considered as his adopted son; and Marcus had scrupulously obeyed him. As this period of his life was associated with his father's moral degradation, he could not wish to allude to it before a stranger. Simon, who, with the garrulity of age, and its imbecility too, dreamed not he was saying any thing his "blessed young master" would wish unsaid, continued his remarks, regardless of the presence of the haughty stranger.

"Young master, how do ole master like his new profession? How do he like the business of overseeing the black, coloured population? Do he have much trouble? He in very 'sponsible office. I hope he have wisdom from the Great Overseer of black and white, way up yonder, young master; wisdom, such as the Lord gave Saul when he built him the big idifice, all out of solid gold."

Again the insolent eyes of the young man measured the figure of Marcus from head to foot, while a supercilious smile curved his lips. Marcus's spirit was roused. The unfortunate allusions of old Simon were particularly galling at this moment. Indeed, they would have been at any moment. For where is the youth of the age of Marcus, fresh from close communion with the aristocracy of the land, honoured himself among the most honourable as the adopted son of a wealthy

planter, who would not shrink from being addressed as the son of a ferryman and overseer? Years hence he might look upon the warring passions of this hour with a superior smile; but now his brow contracted, his fingers quivered, his blue eyes darkened and burned as they gave back the haughty stare of the stranger, and never did a prouder smile curl the lips of the Delphic god, when seen by the divinities in his pastoral attire, than rested on Marcus's disdainful mouth. There was something in his countenance that made the stranger think it best to withdraw his inspection, and the boat went over the waves as if propelled by a giant's hand. The moment they landed, Marcus caught up his hat and gloves, and, without looking at the stranger, walked towards the spring, forgetting in his excitement that he had given no answer to old Simon's well-meant but ill-timed questions.

"You no 'fended with ole Simon, young master?" said the old negro, hobbling after him, seeing that something was wrong, and having sense enough to connect himself with it.

"No, Uncle Simon. I did not answer, because that ill-bred stranger was annoying me so with his rudeness. He is gone, and I am glad of it. I hear his wheels lumbering over the gravel. You asked after my father. He is well and happy—happier than he has been for long years. If he were the brother of Mr. Bellamy, he could not be more honoured."

"The Lord be praised," said Uncle Simon, devoutly.

"And now good-night, Uncle Simon. I am going to sleep just where I am; and I am going to start very early in the morning. I came far out of my way to see you and the old place, and I am glad I find you alive and well. I wish you could come and live with us. If I ever have a home of my own, and you are alive, you shall come and have a nice, comfortable cabin by it. Katy says too you must live with her when she is married. So there is some danger of your being divided. Here, Uncle Simon, take this to remember us both," added Marcus, filling his wrinkled hand with silver. "I shall be

this way again some time. Good-bye. I am glad you linger near this spring. You must always guard it for my sake."

Simon wept again at the token of his young master's kindness, and at the thought of bidding him farewell.

"Me never see you no more," said the aged negro; "but me hope to meet you in heaven above, where we both be one colour, one people, white as snow, inside and out. Tell Milly I 'spect to meet her there, and Miss Katy too, bless her little heart. Ole Simon 'member 'em all, every one, in his prayers to heavenly Master."

Marcus looked after the old Christian soldier with melancholy interest, for in all human probability he would never see him again in this world; then spreading the blanket on the hard rock, he stretched himself by the fountain whose sweet, soothing, minor tone stole lovingly in his ears, and calmed his exasperated spirit. Every thing around breathed of such heavenly tranquillity, it could not but be diffused into his own soul. The shadow of the magnolia leaves played upon his face, the moonbeams played upon the waters, and the long blue-green moss played in the clear, silvered depths of the fountain. Vainly did Marcus try to shut one bright, deluding image from his mind. Vainly did he sigh for the fabled stream of Lethé to wash out its remembrance. L'éclair sparkled in the moonlight waters—L'éclair whispered in the murmuring rill—L'éclair bent over him in the fragrant tree. At last he slept, and L'éclair floated into his dreams, and converted them into a bewildering maze. The angel, who stept into the pool of Bethesda, imparting a healing influence to the troubled waters, could hardly have looked more like a celestial messenger, than Marcus, slumbering calmly in the silver moonbeams, that imparted their pale glory to his youthful features. The ferryman's wife came down at a late hour, to dip her bucket in the spring; but so charmed, so awe-struck was she, by the beauty of his repose, she would not disturb it by the plunge of her wooden vessel, and turned away, with stilly footsteps.

The sweet twittering of the birds in his leafy canopy awa-

kened him at the dawning day. Starting and leaning forward, he saw himself reflected in the blue mirror of the fountain. He knew not where he was. Passing his fingers through his dewy hair, he tried to recollect and define his present position. Was the shrill warble just then swelling above him, the peal of the college bell? Was the murmuring sound in his ears the hum of the students' voices, as they went hurrying to the morning prayer? No; it all flashed upon him at once—he was in the vestibule of the great temple of day, from whose unpillared dome the twilight shadows were faintly, slowly rolling away, before the coming of the god that was soon to ascend his burning throne. Kneeling on the rock, late his couch, and now his altar, he mingled his morning orison with the balmy incense that was rising from the bosom of the earth.

Not for three years had Marcus felt so fully and deeply the influence of devotion. The hurry and confusion attending morning prayers at college, the irreverent rush, the half-made toilet, the lingering yawn, and scarce-wakened attention, convert these hasty exercises into a cold, unmeaning ritual. He rose and bathed his face and hands in the spring, perceiving that his hostess had laid a nice napkin on the rock for his use. Remembering Katy's parting injunction to bring her the moss and magnolia leaves, he gathered some of both, then rightly believing the ferryman's wife would come at an early hour to see if her blanket were safe, he deposited some money in its folds, and was soon mounted and on his way through the woods. The next evening he arrived at Bellamy Place, after an absence of two years. Aunt Milly, who did not look a day older than when he saw her last, had arrayed herself in her best attire to welcome home her darling young master. She was never satisfied with gazing upon him. She walked round and round him, believing with Simon that he was a "born angel." She received Simon's message with reverential emotions, mingled with tears.

"Poor ole soul!" said she, "and did he tell you to say so

to Milly? Yes! he ripe for the kingdom come. He good ole Christian, if ever was one."

Mr. Warland lifted his heart in gratitude to God, for having given him such a son. All that he was himself he owed to him. It is true, Mr. Bellamy had taken him by the hand, and raised him from poverty to comfort and respectability; but it was Marcus who had rescued him from ruin, ruin of body and soul. It was he who had sustained him when the spirit of temptation rent him, as it were, in twain, and led him to the Divine Healer. The father had felt a dread lest his fatal passion should prove hereditary—lest his son, exposed to the temptations of a college life, might yield to the seductions of evil example, and feel that sting more deadly than the fangs of the serpent, than the bite of the adder. But now he stood before him, in his stainless purity and fair renown, blending the grace and simplicity of youth with the dignity of advancing manhood.

Marcus, who had heard and mourned the tragic fate of the beautiful mulatto girl, was led by Katy to her grave, over which the willow wept, and round which the sweet vines trailed, and went clambering over the marble slab that marked her name and age. Those who believe that the southern negro lives and dies, uncared-for and unlamented as the brutes that perish, would not imagine that it was over the tomb of an humble mulatto that brother and sister were now leaning; that it was for her the tear was glistening in the young man's eyes, and bedewing the fair cheek of the maiden. Katy never could visit the grave of Cora without tears, and she often pulled up the weeds that grew among the blossoms that adorned it.

"What is become of King?" asked Marcus.

"He is married to Pinky, a young negro as black as ebony."

"Alas, for the constancy of man!" cried Marcus. "I should have thought poor Cora's sad death would have purchased a longer lease of love."

"He was so much flattered and admired as a young widower by the black damsels," said Katy, "I do not wonder so much.

But poor Hannibal still mourns, and refuses to be solaced by a new attachment. I used to be afraid of Hannibal, but now I would trust him sooner than any negro on the plantation."

"I believe he is worthy to be trusted; worthier than some white men I know," said Marcus, looking so earnestly at Katy that her eyes as usual were bowed to the earth.

"Have you been deceived in any of your friends, Marcus?"

"Yes, Katy, in one whom I loved even as my own brother. Do you remember Delaval, who distinguished you so much at college?"

"Yes." The monosyllable was very low, and Katy twisted her fingers in the willow boughs.

"I have every reason to believe him betrothed to the young lady who was introduced to you by the name of L'éclair, though he professed to me indifference to her attractions. I feared you might have been pleased by his flatteries, you know so little of the insincerity of the world. She is a brilliant heiress, and what has my little Katy to weigh in the balance but a sweet face and a true and spotless heart?"

He drew her arm through his, and they walked towards the house. Katy shivered—"Are you cold?" said Marcus.

"No," answered Katy, sadly, "but I could not help it."

No, she could not help it, poor girl. She felt a chill such as no outward elements can cause. Marcus did not know how much of apparently downright, heart-gushing love Delaval had infused into Katy's unsophisticated ear, and how believingly and trustingly she had listened. If he had, his indignation would have been far greater.

His visit to Delaval, to which he had looked forward so eagerly, was now a necessity to which he reluctantly submitted. They were to travel together to the North, and he had engaged to meet him at his own home. Though he could no longer confide in him as a friend, his obligations as a gentleman were binding, and must be fulfilled. He received a very pressing and affectionate letter from Delaval, urging his coming, and winding up with some glowing compliments to Katy he did

not think proper to repeat. The young man threatened to come himself and carry him to Wood Lawn, if he did not very soon report himself there. This was the last thing Marcus wished, on his sister's account; he therefore hurried his departure, and found himself, with a heart not quite so light as it was two years before, on the road to Wood Lawn. He tried to think calmly on the possibility of meeting L'éclair, and of treating her with the indifference her levity and vain desire for conquest merited. He tried to forget her, but she was a golden thread not regularly woven into his being that could be soberly unravelled without destroying the whole, but shot here and there in zigzag line, difficult to follow and impossible to separate.

Wood Lawn was an elegant establishment, still more imposing in appearance than Bellamy Place, though occupying a less commanding site. Marcus had lingered purposely on the journey during the middle of the days, as he was in Mr. Bellamy's private carriage, and could command his own time. It was to leave him at Wood Lawn, where he arrived at candlelight. He preferred the hour of night, as he could meet Delaval with less constraint than in the blaze of day. Nothing could be more hearty and cordial than the greeting of Delaval. He bounded down the steps of the piazza, and actually hugged Marcus in his arms.

"My dear fellow—my noble fellow—I am so glad you are come. It is an age since I have seen you. Come in—let me look at you again, illustrissime adolescens."

"Oh, for more sincerity and less profession," thought Marcus, whose chilled heart could not respond to this joyous greeting. Delaval led the way to a private apartment.

"Come," says he, "I know you want to brush off a little of the dust of travelling before presenting yourself to the ladies. I have described you as such an Apollo, you must do justice to my description."

"What ladies?" asked Marcus, carelessly arranging his hair. He had arrived at a sublime indifference to the whole

female sex, with the exception of his sister and Mrs. Bellamy; at least, he had imposed on himself this conviction.

"My sister, and Mrs. Lewis, who acts as duenna to the first, a most agreeable and excellent lady notwithstanding"—

"I do not remember your ever speaking of your sister," said Marcus.

"Oh, I must have done it a hundred times. Neither did I remember that you had ever spoken of yours, till I saw the sweetest, fairest blue-eyed damsel that ever stole into the bowers of fancy. You never spoke of her to me. You thought her too sacred to introduce into the walls of a college, and I suppose I had similar feelings with regard to Florence."

His gay allusion to Katy awakened the bitter feelings of Marcus, and it was with a clouded brow he turned to follow Delaval from the room.

"What in the world is the matter with you?" exclaimed Delaval, stopping on the threshold, and looking directly in the face of Marcus. "I never saw one so altered in my life. By the shade of Cicero, you must be going through a metempsychosis, you are so solemn and cold. Good heavens, Marcus, have I offended you?"

There was something so straightforward in the look, so honest in the tones of Delaval, that Marcus could not resist their momentary influence. With his native frankness he grasped his hand, and said—

"Delaval, I *am* hurt that you have not trusted me—that you have deceived me with regard to L'éclair. Why did you conceal your attachment for her, and watch me like the blinded moth fluttering round the blaze, that might consume me?"

"Why, Warland, you are beside yourself," cried Delaval, with a gay laugh, that grated on the ears of Marcus. "What has happened since we left college to put such an idea in your head? I am sure we parted in all warmth and confidence."

Marcus told Delaval the transient glimpse he had caught of himself and L'éclair by the running brook, and the conviction that was forced upon his mind.

"My dear fellow," said Delaval, laughing, and blushing at the same time; "is that all? Why, the poor girl was weary, and there was no back to the log, and I could not help supporting her. I acknowledge that I love her, Warland; but if *my* love interfere with your happiness, I promise to root it from my heart. Come, let us dismiss this subject for the present. I long to introduce Florence to you. I wish she might rival that witch of a L'éclair."

Delaval conducted Marcus through a long hall to a large and brilliantly lighted drawing-room, where two ladies were seated on a sofa, the farther side of the room. The elder lady, whom Delaval introduced as Mrs. Lewis, rose and advanced near the door to greet the stranger, whom Delaval had warmly recommended to her favour. The younger remained seated, her face averted from the light, and shaded by a cloud of jetty ringlets.

"Florence," said Delaval, drawing Marcus towards the sofa, "this is my friend, Marcus Warland. Warland, this is my sister Florence, a very provoking, but rather clever girl, on the whole."

The young lady stood up and turned towards Marcus, with a crimson cheek and a smiling lip. The resplendent eyes of L'éclair flashed laughingly upon him.

"L'éclair!" he exclaimed, snatching the hand she only half extended. "L'éclair, you have indeed made a plaything of me—you too, Delaval," said he, bending on him his now radiant countenance; "you, too, have been leagued against me."

"It is all *her* doings," replied Delaval. "I told you she was the most self-willed little gipsy in the universe. She *would* make me do just what she pleased, sadly against my own conscience."

"I am afraid *you have* something to answer for," said Marcus, "in denying your office of carrier-dove, with such offended majesty."

"You recollect, Warland, I never actually denied it. I assumed a lofty tone, implying the impossibility of my doing any thing so silly and girl-like, as I really think it was."

"Let me entreat you both," cried Florence, with an air of charming ingenuousness, "never to allude to those acts of folly, which have long since cost me my own self-esteem. Had I then felt as I do now, worlds would not have tempted me into such reckless disregard of what is due to myself." Blushing at the energy of her expressions, she added, "Let all this be forgotten, with the name of L'éclair. I am henceforth Florence —Florence to both. Pray don't call me Miss Delaval, Mr. Warland; I could not tolerate that."

"And pray don't call me *Mr. Warland*, then. I have never been *Mistered* yet, and I hope the formal title will not commence on your lips."

"What shall I call you?—Master Marcus Warland?"

"I am Marcus, at home—Warland, in college. I love home-born associations best."

"Well, you shall be Marcus to me, and Warland to George; so both appellations shall be honoured."

Mrs. Lewis had left the room, and the trio sat on the sofa, in the full light and joy of restored confidence. Marcus could hardly identify himself with the sternly-resolving being of the hour before. He wondered at his own stupidity in believing it possible that the frank, the generous, the manly Delaval could be treacherous and betraying; the wild, the impulsive, the high-souled L'éclair a cold, vain, deceiving flirt. Never had he seen her so lovely, so fascinating as at this moment. The bright nymph of the fountain, the brilliant incognita of the pen, the graceful muse of the ball-room, were less interesting and attractive, than the young girl in her simple juvenile dress, her dazzling charms, softened and tempered by the mellowing light of home, responding alternately to her brother's playful *jeus d'esprit*, and to the now fluent tongue of Marcus.

When supper was announced, they were joined by the dignified uncle, Mr. Alston, the guardian of Florence and her brother. He was a very cold, silent gentleman, but studiously polite in his manners. He was elaborately aristocratic in every thing he said and did; aristocratic in dress, in equipage, and

his whole demeanour. He was oppressively polite to Marcus, whose position at college was so distinguished, and who, as the ward of Mr. Bellamy, had a passport to the best families in the South. Mrs. Lewis, who presided at the table, had a mild and prepossessing countenance, and performed the honours of hospitality with less show but more grace than the stately Mr. Alston. Though he conversed but little, he sometimes made set speeches, and he deemed this a proper occasion for one. Laying down his knife and fork, and folding his hands, he said,—

"I am very happy, Mr. Warland, to welcome you to Wood Lawn. I observed with great pleasure the manner in which you distinguished yourself at the university, and the high honours which you obtained. Mr. Bellamy is a gentleman, too, whom I respect very highly as a gentleman, and as a man of wealth and family. I am exceedingly particular with whom I associate, or admit as companions to my nephew and niece. It is difficult to break off low associations, much better never to form them. I consider you in every respect an unexceptionable young gentleman; and I again repeat, I am happy to welcome you to Wood Lawn."

With a dignified and self-respecting bow, Mr. Alston resumed his knife and fork. It was not without a great effort that Marcus preserved proper gravity of demeanour during this elaborate address, for a bright eyebeam from Florence, full of mirth and mischief, played upon him for a moment with contagious power. Delaval, too, wore a look of such assumed and patient attention, that Marcus found his only safety was in looking at Mr. Alston, and appearing duly honoured by the august greeting. He replied with the simplest possible expression of gratitude, hoping he might be spared a similar infliction.

When the supper was concluded, and they returned to the drawing-room, Marcus felt a rebound of all his faculties, so heavy had been the weight of Mr. Alston's overpowering aristocracy. He was convinced, that had Uncle Simon made the same revelations before him that he had before the stranger

of the boat, he would not have given him that studied welcome. Delaval placed Florence at the piano, and called forth her most exhilarating strains. At first she played only the gayest waltzes and quicksteps, and Marcus feared the vocal charm was wanting, to give a soul to her brilliant execution. But he was mistaken. Florence had a sweet and powerful voice, and one capable of expressing the deepest and saddest feelings. Indeed, its greatest fascination consisted in a certain tremulous, tearful sound, expressive of unfathomable sensibility. It reminded you of Juliet weeping over the tomb of her Romeo, Cordelia mourning over her white-locked maniac sire, Viola hiding in her heart the love that fed upon her damask cheek. It was evident that she felt what she sang, for her countenance changed with every changing note. Marcus could not have believed it possible that it could express such depth of melancholy; but when she sat, with her long lashes drooping towards her cheek, its carnation hue melting into the softest olive, and her arch and smiling lip quivering with tenderness, he repeated to himself, again and again,—

"Oh, what a heart is there! what capabilities of love and passion lie hidden under that usually gay, brilliant exterior! what equal capacities for sorrow and despair! Charming, impassioned L'éclair! were it mine to awaken the first, how carefully, how jealously would I guard thee from the last."

"Come, lady fair, give us a blither measure," cried Delaval. "Warland looks as if he were turning into a weeping willow, and I have saturated my white handkerchief already."

It was astonishing with what rapidity she dashed into one of the most inspiring, exciting airs of the day. The soft, veiling mist vanished from her eyes, the carnation came back to her cheek, the smile to her lip. Then Marcus said to himself, with a sigh,—

"Where there is such wondrous versatility of feeling, can there be really depth and strength? Is it not superficial, after all? She calls *me* an enigma. Never was there one like her."

Marcus was to remain several days with his friend, and

bright and pleasant days they were. Mr. Alston, at each meal, inflicted upon him one of his formal addresses, but as he was now prepared for them, he knew better how to reply. He found that Florence had a highly cultivated mind for so young a girl; that she was a passionate lover of books, with a marvellous memory that retained all she read. She took him to her library, a small and tastefully decorated room, opening by a bow-window into the garden. Full, rich, scarlet curtains shaded this window, looped up on each side to let in the light, and a sweet-scented vine that came clambering up of its own accord and twined about the frame.

"I know," said Florence, sweeping aside the folds of the curtains, so as to give him a broader view of the gilded tomes; "I know it is in very bad taste to have this red drapery to adorn a library. It should be green, dark classic green, or imperial purple; but neither green nor purple will do to bring in contact with my Egyptian face. I must contrast it with the brilliant scarlet, or gorgeous orange. These volumes," continued she, pointing to some of more massy form and antique binding, "were my father's, and belong by right to George, though I find much to admire and venerate in the old masters, and sometimes, when I change their position and wipe the dust from the binding, I stand, like Dominie Sampson, mounted on that flight of steps, forgetful of time or place. These shelves," added she, turning to a lighter, more ornamented range, "are all my own, exclusively my own. It is here I feel the wizard spell of genius, and wander in the moonlight climes of poetry and romance."

"And it is here," said Marcus, laying his hand on a superb portfolio that was laid upon the table; "here you enclose the burning thoughts, whose influence other minds must own and feel. Here you imprison the electric fire, whose sparks might kindle the coldest substance, and even pass through insulating mediums."

"Does Marcus Warland condescend to flatter?" asked she, with a dash of scorn in her manner. "Oh! if you knew how

I detest flattery! I have had so much of it, merely because I am an heiress, and had the misfortune to lose my parents when I was very young. I was two years at a northern school, and found my true level there. When I attended your commencement I had just returned, and found it very difficult to persuade George not to acknowledge me as his sister on that occasion."

"If he had," said Marcus, colouring, "I should have been saved some keen after-pangs."

"How is that?" cried she quickly, without looking up.

"I should not then have mistaken the affection of a brother for the permitted endearments of a lover," replied Marcus, emboldened by her vivid blushes.

"And why should that pain you, selfish being that you are?" said she with her own peculiar, mocking smile. "Is the heart so narrow that it can contain but one object of interest? Is it a dungeon, where the poor captive sits in solitary confinement, pining for the fresh air that struggles through the iron grate? Cannot I love George, and *like* you, and fifty others too, if I choose? I feel that I have a magnificently large heart."

"Florence—L'éclair," cried he, earnestly; "though your heart were as large as the whole universe, it should not have room for another love than mine, if I once gained admittance there. I speak not of sisterly affection, friendship, or esteem. I speak of love—such love as you were born to inspire, and I was born to feel."

"I wish you would not talk of love," said she, fluttering the leaves of a book she held in her hand; "I want you to be my friend, my true and sincere friend. I want you to tell me of my faults, as you did when we first met at the university; to speak to me in that tone of beautiful, solemn earnestness, to make me feel that you are above me, that I have something to reach after and attain. But don't go to talking raptures, and so forth. Don't try to make me feel my power. I shall grow wilful, haughty, and overbearing—and then"——

"And then," said Marcus, with calm self-possession, "you would have no power over me at all. The moment you tried to make me feel the weight of chains, I could break them as easily as the unshorn giant did the green withes that bound him."

"I have always dreaded the idea of love," she said, more seriously; "because I know, if I once yielded to its power, I should become far more of a vassal than any slave on this broad plantation. There is something terrible to me in the thought of giving one's happiness so completely in another's power; to hang trembling, palpitating on the frail dependency of another's truth and constancy. No!" she added, commanding the agitation of her voice, and waving back her ringlets with sportive grace. "Let me follow my own volitions, for at least three or four years to come; let me enjoy my emancipation from daily rules and scholastic discipline; let my mind soar unfettered to the heights where I wish to stand, and then perhaps, when I am more worthy of the heart's homage, I may be tempted to wear those bonds, which, though covered with roses and seeming light as air, must be stronger than steel, and heavier than iron."

"Listen to me one moment, Florence," said he, taking her hand, and seating her within the shadow of the scarlet curtains, while he sat down by her side. "We are both very young, I know, but we may talk of the future, may we not?"

"The future!" repeated she; "that seems a mighty shadow rolling far, far off."

"Of the past, then—those lightning letters."

"Ah! you promised never to allude to them."

"I did not promise, Florence, though you required the bond. Those letters sealed my destiny. They showed our minds were one. The divided unity has been brought together by those electric sparks, and thinks, and feels, and glows in unison. It was not chance that brought us together at the fountain's side. It was not an idle whim that prompted you to write those kindling words. It was the impulse of the soul seeking its kindred soul, the heart reaching after the mutual heart'

At this moment, when all the softness and sensibility of womanhood mellowed the brightness of her countenance, and her lip trembled with unspoken words, Delaval opened the door, and, laughing, was about to close it again. Florence sprang up and detained him.

"Your friend is too metaphysical for me," she said. "I cannot fathom him. He is a Transcendentalist."

"Well, I want him to take a ride on horseback with me over the plantation. *That* will clear away the German mists from his brain. Supposing you come with us. You will be a far better guide than I am, for there is not a nook or dingle you have not explored."

Away flew Florence, apparently as much excited at the thought of riding as if there were no such thing as sentiment in the world. She soon appeared, equipped in a dark riding-dress, and cap with black, drooping feathers. It looked like the same she had worn when he first saw her, demurely waiting for her recreant pony; but as she had grown since that period, it must have been another, made in a similar fashion. Instead of the recreant brown pony, she mounted a beautiful white horse, which displayed the dark outlines of her figure to great advantage. Wild and fearless, she dashed ahead, regardless of obstructions, and mocking the speed of her companions.

"This is my life," said she to Marcus, as they paused to admire the rich rolling expanse of the cotton-field, bearing the downy wealth of the South. "I am a far better overseer than the one my uncle hires. The negroes will work better for their young mistress than anybody else; and sometimes I jump from my horse and pick cotton with the little negroes, to let them see how fast it can be done."

"You must not do that any more, Florence," said Delaval. "It would do well enough in the child, but not in the young woman, who is joint heiress of these noble fields."

"Oh! I do detest the idea of being a woman," exclaimed Florence. "I wish I could always be a child. Mrs. Lewis is always telling me, 'Florence, you forget how old you are grow-

ing; you must be steadier now.' Dear, stiff, formal uncle cries, in his solemn accents, 'Niece, it is time that you remember the dignity and responsibility of your station;' and even provoking George begins to tutor me, and set me up on the stilts of womanhood and heiress-ship. Marcus, I hope you at least will not preach me out of the wild freedom of childhood yet."

There was something so extremely juvenile in her appearance, with her curls wreathing and sporting with the feathers that drooped over her cheeks; such freshness, and buoyancy, and life about her, that Marcus did think it would be a pity to restrain that wild grace, and brush off that dewy bloom from her bright, morning spirit. He was about to say as much, when she darted off in a new direction, leaving no guide but a gay laugh ringing through the woods, by which to follow her course.

When they were returned they found a visitor had arrived during their absence,—a young gentleman by the name of Pellam, whose father was a particular friend of Mr. Alston, and who was well known to Delaval. Marcus could not help feeling a natural recoil and disgust when he recognised the insolent stranger of the ferry-boat in the new guest at Wood Lawn, and the bow with which he acknowledged the courteous introduction of Delaval breathed the very soul of haughtiness. He could not help it. He could not forget the scornful stare, the supercilious smile, the air of conscious superiority, which had set all his passions boiling, on the waters of the Chattahoochee. They all left the room to change their dress before supper, and Marcus had time to reflect on the probable consequences of the meeting. He knew the sovereign aristocracy of Mr. Alston would look down on the son of a ferryman and overseer, whatever other claims he might have to consideration and regard. Would Delaval be governed by such petty pride? Would Florence? He now regretted the silence Mr. Bellamy had imposed on the subject. Had Delaval known all the realities of his condition, and then invited him to his home, he could not fear the arrogance that now threatened to annoy

him. He lingered in his room, fearing he might lose his self-control in the presence of Florence, if he again met that insolent, measuring glance of pride. Slowly he walked through the carpeted hall, and reached the door of the drawing-room. Pellam and Mr. Alston were sitting with their backs to the door; Delaval and Florence in an oblique direction. Neither observed the approach of Marcus, so intent were they on the words of the speaker, who was Pellam, the new guest.

"I repeat," said he, emphatically, "that his father was a low ferryman, and is now a common overseer. He was bred to the ferryman's trade. I saw him push the boat myself. I heard the old negro talk about his father. I inquired, and found it was all true. I am willing to take my oath upon its truth."

"'Tis false," exclaimed Florence, in a passionate tone. "*He* brought up in a ferryman's hut. *His* father an overseer. Never!"

"This cannot be true," cried Delaval, indignantly. "I was with him three years in college, and never heard a word of it before."

Before the young man could reply, Marcus advanced into the room, and walking in front of Pellam, said, in rather a husky tone of voice, "Is it of me you are speaking, sir?"

"It is," answered the young man, drawing back a few paces, and placing a chair between him and Marcus.

"Deny it, Marcus," cried Florence, "it is nothing but slander—we all know it is."

The earnestness with which Florence spoke; her excited countenance; the indignant looks which Delaval darted towards Pellam; the cold, austere mien of Mr. Alston, staggered the faith of Marcus in his own triumphant power to resist the prejudices of education on the part of his friends, and the narrow pride of the man of wealth and family. But he was glad the trial came when it did. He wanted to see the innate nobility of Florence put to a shining test.

"I cannot deny it," said he, folding his arms across his

breast, "I cannot deny what is truth, and nothing but the truth."

Mr. Alston rose with an air of offended dignity, "This is very surprising," said he, "a very surprising case. I did not imagine my friend Bellamy would have imposed on us in this manner. I, who have always been so particular to select irreproachable companions for my nephew and niece, to be so grossly deceived!"

He put his hands behind him, and walked across the room with an exceedingly imposing demeanour.

"I cannot allow a reflection to be cast on my noble, my excellent benefactor," cried Marcus, with warmth. "He wished me to conceal those circumstances in my father's life connected with the story of his misfortunes and sorrows, and I obeyed him. Perhaps, knowing the world better than myself, he was aware there were some contracted minds, who, measuring me by their own narrow standard, would expose me to the insults of this hour. But let me tell you, sir, that my father is a man of birth equal to your own, and of an education inferior to none of the magnates of the land. My mother was the daughter of a Virginia planter, who boasted of the royal blood of Pocahontas flowing in her veins. Of the misfortunes that impoverished my father, and induced him to seek the solitude of the river's shore, I cannot—ought not to speak. If my young hand was taught to stem the current of the rushing river, it has only been nerved with stronger power to resist,"—here he cast a withering glance at Pellam, who was still intrenched behind the mahogany chair,—"to resist the arrogance that would degrade, and the haughtiness that would oppress. Mr. Bellamy, sir, visited us in the house of my father's darkened fortunes, and seeing him to be a gentleman in education and manners equal to himself, and taking an interest in my then boyish self, drew us from the obscurity uncongenial to our character and talents. It is true my father has assisted him in overseeing his plantation. It is true he has borne the heat and burden of a day of care, in gratitude and fidelity to his

generous friend. But he is no hireling, eating the bread earned by mercenary wages. He is the honoured friend, the revered companion, the respected counsellor, the adopted brother of the first and best of men. If I have concealed these circumstances, it is not that I am ashamed to avow them, but because I have been bound by a promise during the years of my minority. I rejoice that they are revealed. They reflect lustre on my father's present reputation, for greater is he who has resisted temptation than the conqueror of nations. They give beauty and dignity to the name of Bellamy, and they gild with honour, yea, three-fold honour, my own springing laurels."

Marcus spoke with a fervour and enthusiasm and strength that brought the burning blood to his cheek and a burning fire to his eyes, and a trumpet tone to his voice, that voice which was yet to ring like a silver clarion in the walls of his country's capitol.

Delaval sprang forward, and seizing Marcus by both hands, exclaimed, "Warland, you are a glorious fellow—I always said you were. I like you better than I did before, a thousand times better; and by the shade of Cicero, (this was Delaval's standing oath,) I would fight my own brother, if I had one, who should dare to speak disrespectfully of your father in my presence. Florence, tell him that you echo your brother's feelings; let him not believe, for one moment, that you could be swayed by mean and sordid influences."

"I blush for the momentary pride I betrayed at first," cried Florence, with blushing ingenuousness. "The circumstances, as he has explained them, have only ennobled him in my estimation, and they who sought to lower have only elevated him in my eyes."

"Miss Delaval, you are too demonstrative," said Mr. Alston, with a stately wave of his delicate hand. "I see no occasion for any expression of feeling on your part. Remember, you have a dignity to maintain, a station to adorn."

"Dignity—station!" repeated Florence, in a low, scornful tone, sheathing with their long lashes the lightnings of her

eyes. "They cannot squeeze my soul into a thumb-screw; the familiars of the Inquisition could not do it."

The supper-bell rang, and Mr. Alston, waving his hand to Mr. Pellam, who very gladly led the way from the room, where he could not but feel he had disgraced himself in his impotent attempt to depreciate another, turned to Marcus with another wave of the hand; but Marcus stood still.

"I sit not at your board, nor sleep under your roof again, sir," said he, in a calm, respectful tone, "till I am requested to do it, as an equal to yourself, your nephew, and the gentleman now your guest."

"Warland, you are *my* guest," interrupted Delaval, hastily.

"I was never deficient in the duties of hospitality," said Mr. Alston, "and I invite you, as the guest of my nephew, to take your accustomed seat; by so doing, I hope I neutralize the effect of any remarks that may have offended your pride."

With a stiff bow, he crossed the threshold, and Marcus, biting his lip and smoothing his brow, took the arm of Delaval and went to the supper-table. He there conversed with his usual ease with Mrs. Lewis, Delaval, and Florence, but he ate nothing; and when the supper was concluded, he took Delaval apart.

"We must leave to-morrow," said he, "at least, *I* must. Your uncle does not look upon me as he did before, and the presence of this young man is intolerable to me."

"Not more so to you than to me," cried Delaval. "He is an upstart, a proud, ignorant, thick-headed coxcomb, who has fixed his presumptuous eyes upon Florence, caring for nothing but her wealth. He thought the proud heiress would look upon you with disdain, after the knowledge he imparted. *He* aspire to such a girl as Florence! When a frog catches the star that shines upon the pond, then Florence will look down on him. Never mind my uncle, Warland; he can't unbend, his back is too stiff. He never lost his perpendicularity in his life. Besides, *I* am the real master here; he is only the guardian, and invested with delegated rights."

"Nevertheless, we had better start in the morning. It is best that we should. A few days more will make but little difference to you, and it may be of great consequence to me."

"Well, I am ready. I dare say you are right. But I do wish that blockheaded Pellam had stayed away."

They made their arrangements immediately. They were to start very early in the morning, before the family rose, and bade their adieus before retiring for the night. Florence, who would not sit down with Pellam, had taken a light and withdrawn to the library, while Delaval and Marcus were making their hasty preparations. There the young men followed her.

"Florence," said Delaval, "we have come to bid you goodbye; we start in the morning, at daybreak."

"I thought so," said she, with an agitated voice. "You cannot wish to remain while that intruding guest is here." She added this with an expression of the most sovereign contempt.

"We leave him to your tender mercies," said Delaval, "assured that you will not forget what is due to the dignity of your station, as our sapient uncle so often remarks."

Marcus, when he was last in that library, had spoken freely and boldly to Florence of the strong sympathy that drew them to each other; now, he was resolved to make himself a name and fame before he addressed the young heiress in the language of love. The time which would elapse before they again met would prove their minds and hearts. He felt confidence in himself, confidence in her, but his eyes alone betrayed the emotions he felt.

"You will write often, George," said she, when the parting moment came. "You will both write; will you not?"

"I waited only for your permission," replied Marcus. "But may I not address you as L'éclair, when I write? No other name will seem appropriate as a correspondent."

"Write as the spirit prompts," said Florence, with a brilliant blush. "I believe in impulses, after all."

Marcus felt his stoical resolutions melting away. It was evident that Florence wished to convince him that malice had

not shaken the hold he had on her esteem. Never had she spoken so feelingly, so confidingly.

"I don't like long good-byes," cried Delaval, "so God bless you, sweet sis, and watch over you, till I see you again."

Florence wept, as he clasped her in a warm, fraternal embrace, and clung to him in unwillingness to let him go. He was her only brother, and two years of absence was a long, long time, and perhaps other regrets which she dared not avow gave intensity to her emotions. It was strange to see tears flowing from the sunbright eyes of Florence, and Delaval wiped the moisture from his own several times.

"Why, my brave sis," he cried, releasing himself from her arms, "this will never do. Reserve one kiss and one tear for Marcus, your other, better brother."

Thus authorized, Marcus kissed the crimson cheek that rested a moment on his shoulder. It was the first time *his* lips had given, or *her* cheek received the kiss of love, and it *was* love, the first, the only love that had ever warmed their young hearts.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Judge not, frail man, thy brother man,
Lest thou thyself be weigh'd,
And *wanting be*, in those dread scales,
The Eternal God has made."—ANON.

OUR young southerners found themselves, after a pleasant and expeditious journey, on the granite hills of the North, mingling with the sons of those pilgrim fathers, who centuries ago came in the strength of their faith and the sublimity of their hopes, and

"Moored their bark on the wild New England shore."

The wall of division that seemed to separate them from the dwellers of the ruder latitudes of our country sank lower and lower as they advanced into their green and cultivated inland Paradises, for such they appeared in the rich garniture of closing summer. While at the South, the commencement of

the autumnal season was marked by here and there a pallid leaf and a crisping blade, there every thing was glowing with the effulgence of vernal bloom.

Judge Cleveland, who presided over the law school which the young men entered, had been a classmate of Mr. Bellamy, who was educated at a northern university. The friendship formed between the students had outlived the chilling influences of time, separation, and opposing political interests. It was this which had induced Mr. Bellamy to send his adopted son to the town where he dwelt, one of the most beautiful and flourishing of the minor cities of the Eastern States.

It must be acknowledged, that notwithstanding the warm encomiums Mr. Bellamy had given the character of Judge Cleveland, the young southerners were imbued with some of the peculiar prejudices of the region where they were born, against northern coldness and reserve. They expected to find the hearts of the people covered with a cake of ice, clear and pure, but cold, inevitably cold, and though after a while it might break or melt, still the atmosphere around them must remain chilling and repulsive. They expected to meet with strong and majestic intellects, unrivalled powers of ratiocination, and concentration of thought intense as the solar rays. But they did not expect the urbanity, the warmth, the genial kindness with which Judge Cleveland met them at the door of his rural palace, nor the frank and sunny welcome of his charming wife. They were to become members of the family, and they were domiciliated at once, and invested with all the privileges of home. It was indeed fortunate for them that their lines had fallen in such a place. Judge Cleveland was one of those men who belong to mankind, not to the limited portion that surrounded him. As the traveller, wherever he may be, mid northern snows or southern blossoms, when he turns his eyes upon the illimitable firmament, seems himself the central point of the universe, so does such a man appear to those who feel his influence. No matter what position he assumes, he is still the central point towards which the social

rays converge. He was a patriot, a philanthropist, and much did he mourn over the divided interests of the two beautiful and flourishing regions of the common country. Could he, like the Roman Curtius, have closed the widening chasm by throwing his own life into the abyss, and seen with his dying eyes the yawning edges meeting over his crushed and mangled limbs, he would gladly have done it, so dear to his heart was the union which the blood of his fathers had cemented, and the spirit of Washington for ever hallowed. All that he could he did, to stem the misguided zeal, that, espousing the cause of one portion of the human race, would place the torch in the hand of the incendiary, and the knife in the grasp of the assassin, and roll on a wave of blood and flame over a fair and smiling land.

Instantaneously did the judge win the confidence of the warm-hearted young men who were placed under his charge. There was a mixture of majesty and mildness, of gentleness and firmness in his appearance and manner, that was singularly pleasing. If he spoke in the circle of home with the sweetness of woman's accents, one felt that he could launch the thunderbolt of eloquence, at the legal tribunal. If his large gray eye beamed with benevolence and tenderness on the domestic shrine, still there was a latent spark in its centre, ready to flash and burn into the very heart of the criminal arraigned before his bar.

They were fortunate, too, in the location they had chosen for their transient home in the North. There was no fairer, lovelier spot, among the fair, green fields of New England. Mountains, whose empurpled mist rolled like a royal drapery round them, over which the clouds cast their ermine mantle and the sunbeams a golden fringe, guarded, with God-born strength, the sweet, luxuriant valley at their feet. A magnificent river, the pride and glory of the Granite State, formed its eastern boundary, and gladdened and fertilized with its clear, deep, rejoicing waters, the tranquil landscape through which it flowed. Nature seemed clothed with the freshness

and vigour of eternal spring. It was impossible to believe those fields of living, dazzling green would ere long be covered with a cold, white winding-sheet of snow; those blue, bright-flowing waters bound with fetters of ice, and hard and unyielding as flint. But it was even so; and notwithstanding the bleakness of the scenery and the intense cold of the atmosphere, our young southerners enjoyed, with a keen zest, the exhilarating pleasures of a northern winter. Perhaps a few extracts from their letters to their southern friends would give their impressions in a more vivid manner than any narrative could do.

"On my soul, Florence," thus wrote Delaval to his sister, in the midst of snow, and ice, and frost; "on my soul, I wish you were here. This is the very region for one of your free, glad, brave spirit. I thought I should be shrunk into the dimensions of a cubic inch, congealed into an impenetrable cake of ice; but never did I feel a more extended sense of vitality, a fuller consciousness of jubilant existence. I feel as if I could wrestle with the snow-spirit, and mock its merriest gambols. If you only knew the rapture of a moonlight sleigh-ride! Last night Marcus and myself joined a party, that went out about seven or eight miles from here, to a dance. We were all in double sleighs, six in each, pretty closely packed together in buffalo skins; and if you had seen the bright-eyed, rosy-cheeked maiden who sat next to Marcus, to say nothing of the one at my right hand, I fear a pang of jealousy would have shot through your bosom. I tell you, bright heiress of Wood Lawn, the stars themselves don't shine more brilliantly, or wink more mischievously, than the eyes of these northern damsels during these moonlight rides through drifting snow, and the music of the bells that ring multitudinously on the necks of the spirited horses is not more inspiring than their joyous merriment. If it were not for a certain pair of down-dropping, silk-shaded, love-diffusing, violet eyes at the South, that have irretrievably stolen away my heart, I should certainly be captivated by some of these high-spirited, whole-souled, warm-

hearted daughters of New England. I see winter here is the season of hilarity and amusement. There has been a constant succession of parties lately, mostly, I believe, in honour of your humble servants. Warland is the lion of the season. That extraordinary attraction he carries about him, that captivated at one glance a certain little wild, dark girl of my acquaintance, that riveted me, when I first beheld him on the recitation bench, dismal place as it was, draws magnetically toward him man, woman, and child. I find my lesser lustre completely merged in his superior brightness. I will give you an instance. The other night we attended a gathering at the hospitable mansion of Judge Carlton. I shall never more prate of hospitality as if it were the peculiar, the exclusive grace of the South. Never have I seen it more cordially, nobly exercised, than in this land of snow. Perhaps you will say they think we are the sons of rich southern nabobs, and court our wealth and alliance. No such thing. There is less of the aristocracy of wealth here than at any place I ever saw. The only sovereignty admitted is that of mind. And Judge Cleveland really reigns on a throne, whose foundations are everlasting as the hills,—yea, far more so; for the perpetual hills will bow, and the elements melt with fervent heat; but the mind of man shares the eternity of the Being from whom it emanates. That they should make an excitement about Warland is not surprising; but for me, if I were made of gold and studded with diamonds, they could not cherish me more kindly. But in his presence, as I said before, my fine gold is all dim. I have lost the thread of my story. The other night at Judge Carlton's, when we entered the room, the walls were all lined with living blossoms, blooming as gayly as if it were all summer abroad. We sought the lady of the house, to pay our respects, as in duty bound we ought. Of course, the eyes of the lady were fixed on the splendid face and form of Warland, and beheld only *his* graceful bow, though I am sure I put my best foot foremost on the occasion. After a while she asked Warland, in a very sweet voice, 'How is your friend Mr

Delaval? I hope he is not indisposed, that he did not accompany you'—and there I was, right at his elbow, looking steadily at her with my big black eyes. I was but a mote in the sunbeams—a little, twinkling planet, lost in the effulgence of day. When we moved round among the living blossoms, the sweet wall-flowers, that fluttered, as we approached, like roses at the coming of the zephyrs, it was to him the fair heads inclined, toward him the ringlets bowed. Perhaps here and there some very polite damsel would inquire, 'Why Mr. Delaval did not come?' while I was looking at her unutterable things. To tell the truth, so dearly do I love him, so ardently do I admire him, and so truly do I honour him, that I should think meanly of her or him, who did not forget me in his presence, unless it might be a sister of his, perchance. I would be willing to make her an exception.

"You ought to hear him when defending the rights of the South. You must not think, because I speak of moonlight rides and gay *soirées*, that we court amusement at the expense of study. We are the hardest students in the institution. I am obliged to study harder than Warland. He seems to take in every thing, no matter how difficult or abstruse it may be, by a kind of intuition. Instead of being obliged to toil up the rugged steeps of knowledge step by step, he really has found a royal way. His spirit is plumed with the pinions of the eagle, and bears him up toward the goal for which we are panting below.

"About a week ago Judge Cleveland gave a dinner to his students, and invited the principal gentlemen of the place to meet us. When Mrs. Cleveland, who presided with true southern grace and hospitality, had retired, the conversation gradually assumed a political turn. There was one gentleman present whose prejudices against the South are very bitter, and for whose opinions I have very little respect. Yet he has reputed intellect, and a high standing in society. I saw him in earnest conversation with Marcus. One by one, those who were conversing with others left their companions and drew near the cynosure. I

was anxious to become a listener myself, for I saw that he was excited by the dark spot in his eyes and the slight quiver of his lips, a peculiarity of his which gives great depth of expression to his countenance when speaking. I know not what had been previously said, but the first words I caught were these, evidently in answer to something advanced by his antagonist:

"'I do not pretend to justify those who first rolled this shadow on our land. My conscience would not permit me to do it. The evil as it now exists is too widely extended, too deeply rooted, to admit of the remedy you propose. You may eradicate the weeds from your garden, the tares from your wheat, but this is like the fibrous grass, so interwoven into the soil it binds together that you cannot tear it up, without destroying the earth where it grows.'

"'Better let it be destroyed at once,' said his opponent, 'than have it kept together by such an unholy cement.'

"'Time, the great rectifier of all human ills,' replied Marcus, with graceful gravity, 'can alone accomplish the work. Every rash and hasty effort will only make the operation more difficult and protracted. He who is actuated by philanthropy and a sincere desire to ameliorate the condition of slaves, will only deprive them of the blessings they already enjoy, and retard the period of their emancipation. Should a servile war be the consequence, *their* ruin would be inevitable, as well as the destruction of thousands of lovely and innocent beings, whose claims to humanity seem forgotten in a wild and burning zeal.'

"'Those who live on the edge of a crater,' replied the gentleman, 'must expect to be destroyed by the volcanic power that ejects the boiling lava. But such a state of existence would not be life to me. It would be living death. I could neither eat nor sleep with the groans of these unhappy creatures ringing in my ears; with their tears moistening the bread their shackled hands were preparing for my lips. I should expect every mouthful would choke me. I should expect my dreams would be haunted by the spectres of accusing conscience.'

"'I am very young,' said Warland, looking earnestly at the

group now gathered around him, 'and my words may have less weight on that account; but, nevertheless, I hope their truth will be their passport. Young as I am, I have been on many broad plantations, and witnessed the discipline of hundreds and hundreds of slaves. I have seen them in the household, I have seen them in the field, and seldom while engaged in their labours have I heard one groan of anguish, or witnessed one tear of sorrow. They sing and jest over their tasks, and wear far happier and more smiling faces than the hired servants employed to perform your daily work. They are not taxed beyond their strength and endurance. Self-interest alone, if no higher, better motive, would induce the planter to husband the strength that is to till his soil and gather in its wealth. That there are instances where the master abuses his power, and the African feels the heavy weight of bondage, I do not doubt; for where is the social or political institution which tyranny has not abused and power perverted? The taskmaster of your factories often oppresses the pale operative that toils over the loom, and the master of a household sometimes rules with an iron rod. I only contend for the general law of kindness and humanity.'

"'Still, you must acknowledge,' continued the gentleman, 'that the only bond existing between the enslaver and the slave must be exerted power on one side and enforced obedience on the other.'

"'No, sir,' exclaimed Warland, with a heightening colour, and his fine voice swelling like a rich, deep-toned instrument. 'I acknowledge no such thing. There is the bond of affection, of gratitude, tenderness, and esteem. The dark background of slavery exhibits some of the most beautiful and touching traits of the southern character, and into that dark ground itself are wrought some of the brightest and softest colours that adorn the landscape of life. Allow me to speak of my own experience. In very early years, myself and infant sister were deprived of a mother's care, and peculiar circumstances threw us on the kindness and fidelity of a negro nurse. With all a mother's self-sacrificing tenderness she

watched over and cherished us, and with true filial and devoted love have we repaid her maternal cares. The fair hands of my adopted mother, the mistress of more than a hundred slaves, are now scarred by the flames, into which she plunged them to save the life of a poor mulatto girl whom she tenderly loved.'

"'This is indeed a very uncommon instance,' said the gentleman, 'but there are some noble, self-sacrificing beings who redeem the selfishness of a whole generation. There are some even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments.'

"'This is not a solitary example. I could tell of many more,' cried my friend, 'but I fear I am engrossing the conversation, and transgressing the limits of youthful modesty.'

"I wish, Florence, you could have seen the graceful blush that mantled over the face of the young champion of our institutions, as he looked on the eager listeners who were gathering close round the charmed ring.

"'No, no,' exclaimed several voices, 'pray go on, we are deeply interested in hearing. Give us facts, they are more convincing than rhetoric.'

"'On the river whose rapid current made the music of my boyhood,' continued Warland, 'there was a burning boat. Among those who were exposed to a fiery death there was only one lady, accompanied by a negro girl. The pilot, who chanced to be a negro, with a chivalry that would have done honour to a white man, rushed to the lady, and told her if she would suffer him to fasten a rope round her body, and attach it also to his own, he could save her life. "And my girl too," cried she, turning to the poor negro, who was clinging to her side. "I sorry, mistress, I cannot take but one." "Then I die with her," said the heroic woman. "I cannot leave her to perish. Save yourself. I ask not life on such terms." The African, more anxious than ever to rescue one so disinterested and humane, made superhuman exertions, and bore them both in safety through the roaring flames and the whelming waves. This is only one of a thousand instances that might be brought for-

ward to prove the strong affection existing between those whom the Almighty has distinguished by the midnight hue and the tints of morning. Delaval, why are you silent? You might speak volumes, for you have myriads under your own sway.'

"What could I say to add any force to his eloquent relation of facts? Yet, thus called upon, I could not help stepping forward to join in the disputation. Judge Cleveland, I observed, had listened with intense interest to this conversation, and his large, gray eyes grew luminous as Warland spoke.

"'I cannot speak of myself,' said I, with becoming modesty, 'as I have not taken the reins in my own hands, but I certainly have the best intentions to carry out my father's benevolent discipline. When he was on his death-bed, one of his latest, most solemn injunctions to me was, to be kind to the slaves he committed to my care. "Remember, my son," he cried, with deep solemnity, "that you must give an account of *your* stewardship, as I am about to render mine; and I can say, in the prospect of death and eternity, that I have never voluntarily caused a tear to flow." My uncle, who is now delegated with the authority that will soon be mine, is a just man, (though my friend here will tell you a most sovereign aristocrat,) and I most certainly, in all honesty and sincerity, intend to obey the injunctions of my lamented father. I wish you would visit us, sir, after my return to the South, and if I do not prove a second Nero or Henry the Eighth, who, though very promising youths, became the most horrible tyrants, I will show you a collection of smiling, black faces, that will have more eloquence than a hundred tongues like mine.'

"'Thank you,' said the gentleman. 'I should like very much to witness such a state of things as you describe. But if they are really happy, why do we see so many fugitives trying to escape from their bonds?'

"'Why, the world is full of runaways of every kind,' answered I. 'There is many a truant schoolboy that eludes his task; many a recreant from the authority of home; and many a young miss that makes a moonlight flitting. But

there are innumerable examples of those who have resisted the strongest allurements to remain in a land of freedom, and preferred the service of their masters to being aliens in a strange home.'

"'There is one thing I would like to hear you explain, my young friend,' continued he, turning to Warland, who had drawn back so as not to veil my dawning brightness. 'You observed these bondmen exhibited more cheerfulness than those whom we employ to fill subordinate stations in our household, though they toil for others without hope of remuneration. I should like to hear you explain the principle that animates them.'

"'Your servants, as far as I understand,' cried Warland, 'are ever changing, seldom remaining long in the service of the same family. The prospect of higher wages will induce them to leave the kindest and best of friends. There is seldom time given for the formation of binding attachments. While the negro, who is born in the household of his master, and brought up with his children, feels identified with its interests by all those powerful associations which are twined round the heart in the morning of life. It is true he toils for his master, but he is fed, and clothed, and sheltered, without care or forethought of his own. In sickness he is nursed; in old age protected; free from those anxious misgivings for the future, which oppress the hearts of their owners. Oh! believe me, sir, we are strangely misunderstood. I would not for the sovereignty of worlds attempt to remove your prejudices by the sacrifice of *truth;* but when it inspires and sustains me in all I utter, I could go on and speak volumes on the subject, if the memory of my youth and position did not warn me to forbear.'

> "The angel ended—and in *every* ear
> So charming left his voice, that we awhile
> Thought him still speaking, still stood fix'd to hear.

"Now, my own dear Florence, if you do not feel proud of your friend and mine, you are not the girl I think you are. I think I see you while you are reading this scene. I see the brilliant coruscations of your aurora-borealian countenance.

I longed to tell them of your devotion to Mammy, as you still call her, when she was sick; how you sat up night after night, in spite of warning and remonstrance, bathing her feverish head, and administering to the comfort of one who had so often nursed and watched over your wayward infancy. I longed to tell them what delight you take in petting and dressing your little live ebony dolls; and how idolized you are by every soul on the plantation. I wanted to describe you flying from cabin to cabin, scattering light and joy as you fly, and welcomed as a ministrant from heaven, wilful child of earth though you be. But you are *my* sister, and it would have seemed like glorifying myself to proclaim *your* praises, and I knew you would curl your saucy lip if I dared even to mention your august name in the presence of strangers.

"By the shade of Cicero, what a letter I've written, to go in company with one, too, for which mine will be long forgotten. No, I will recall that; I know you love me too well not to be willing to read all and more than I can write. Farewell, formosissima carissima."

We would like to transcribe some of the letters of Marcus, but Florence kept them under lock and key, in a beautiful rosewood cabinet, and allowed no one to peruse them. Hers were as jealously secluded from the curious eye, and though not bearing the signature of Lightning, were written on the same delicate tissue, and breathing the same delicious perfume.

Marcus had not forgotten to vindicate Delaval, in his letters to Katy, from the aspersions he had cast upon him, and it is possible Delaval enclosed some missive of his own in the brother's epistles, for they were generally quite imposing-looking packets; not only those which were sent, but those which were received in return. We would like to present this correspondence to the reader, especially that part which describes the glorious awakening of Nature from her wintry lethargy, the escape of the glad river from bondage, when in all the joy of emancipation it broke asunder its icy fetters, and dashed them a glittering wreck upon its bosom; the carnation of the

mountains when they resumed the regalia of spring, and the valley, clothed like a bride, in a silver drapery of mist, lay smiling and bashful at their feet.

Yes, grand and magnificent is the return of spring in the northern latitudes. It comes like a conqueror bearing the trophies of victory, its path strewed with roses, and its brow crowned with garlands of green. A voice, as of many waters, heralds its approach, and winter, bound in flowery chains, follows its triumphal car.

CHAPTER IX.

"Look, look, red as blood
All on high!
It is not the daylight that fills with its flood
The sky!
What a clamour awaking
Roars up through the street,
What a hell-vapour breaking,
Rolls on through the street,
And higher and higher
Aloft moves the column of fire!"—SCHILLER.

IT is said, that a course of uninterrupted prosperity hardens the heart of man, and makes him forgetful of the Giver of every good and perfect gift; that he buildeth fine palaces and lordly barns, and saith, with haughty self-elation, "Soul, make merry with thy goods, and enjoy without fear the long banquet of life." It is not always so. Mr. Bellamy's heart was not the clay that bakes and indurates in the sunshine, in which no seed will germinate, no vegetation take root. It was a sunny slope that produced the richest fruit and verdure, because the beams shed warmth on its surface, and it radiated them back to the atmosphere. The more prosperous he was, the more grateful was he to God, the more benevolent to his fellow-man.

Marcus had been absent more than a year. An unusually abundant season had crowned the hopes of the planter, and the cotton-bolls, opened by a fervid sun, were gathered without being exposed to any of those autumnal rains which so often

destroy the harvest-bloom. Indeed, it had been singularly dry, and now that the earth had given in its increase, nothing would have been considered a greater blessing than a shower to sprinkle the dusty shrubbery and the thirsty earth. The moon shone with a crimson hue through the dry and powdery atmosphere, and Aunt Milly said it was a certain sign that something was going to happen, when it had that bloody colour. She did hope it was not to Master Marcus. The family sat in the piazza, and Katy, as she watched the blood-red orb slowly rolling up above the skirts of the woods, wondered if a pair of deep-black eyes, distant from her own, were gazing on its disk, and if their master were thinking of *her*. Mrs. Bellamy leaned back in the chair in serene silence, while Mr. Bellamy and Warland sat and talked on themes of mutual interest. The strains of Hannibal's violin were heard in the back yard, and some little nimble-footed negroes were jumping *Georgia motion*, and making the dust fly like ashes over their heads. Several old negroes were sitting round the doors of their cabins, smoking their pipes and shaking their heads knowingly at each other at some sage remark wafted to their ears.

"I know not why it is," said Mr. Bellamy, "but I sometimes feel sad from the very excess of my contentment. I feel the impossibility of such a state of things always lasting. I have been so blessed, so favoured by Providence, that dark days must be in store for me, for I cannot expect to be exempt from the common lot. About the time I first visited your cabin, Mrs. Bellamy was in delicate health, and I felt anxious on *her* account. That cloud passed away, and left the horizon clear. Ever since then I have prospered. I believe your coming among us, Warland, you and your children, brought a blessing on the household. You have been an able coadjutor, a wise and faithful friend. I wonder now how I ever got along without you."

"I am sure *I* found the blessing here," replied Warland, with grateful emotion. "This has been the gate of heaven to me. The events of that night, which brought you under my

roof, were arranged by Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Mercy too. When I think what I then was, and what I now am; when I remember what you have done for my children,—my sweet Katy, my noble Marcus,—my heart swells; I find no room for words."

"Speak not of what I have done. I have been repaid a thousand-fold already. What we do for ourselves is like water spilled upon the sand; what we do for others like the dew on the grassy plain. I know, when I come to my dying hour, the memory of what I have been enabled to do, to promote the happiness of my fellow-beings, will linger when all selfish enjoyments have passed away. I have never met with one instance of treachery or ingratitude in man. I have never suffered from those destroying elements which have often laid waste the hopes of others. Fire has never consumed my buildings, nor floods deluged my lands. Pestilence has never swept off my negroes, nor mutiny stolen into their ranks. God has certainly been very gracious to me. I feel oppressed by the weight of his unmerited goodness."

Mr. Bellamy paused and raised his eyes above, with reverential devotion, seeing in the moon, now rising higher and higher above the dust of earth, her crimson radiance melting into gold, an image of that divine love whose influence he so deeply felt. We dwell on this evening's tranquil scenes, because so terrible a contrast was about to be presented. Katy, unable to resist the attraction of Hannibal's violin, ran into the back yard, where the *Georgia motion* was still kept up with unwearied vivacity. Katy did not join the performers, but she danced round Hannibal, who sat under a China tree, with the moon glimmering through the boughs on his shining, coal-black face, which was now bent obliquely over his instrument, then raised enthusiastically and thrown back in a horizontal direction. He always seemed inspired when playing, and nothing delighted him so much as to see the nymph-like figure of Katy floating with gossamer grace on his evening serenades. He always said she danced just like Cora, and

"she looked sorter like her too, only if she had black eyes instead of blue, and black hair instead of brown, and had a *leetle* darker skin, the likeness would be more complete."

Katy was the darling of all the negroes, from the Carthaginian General down to the smallest child that rolled under the hickory's shade. This night she seemed animated with unwonted hilarity, for her mood was usually quiet and serene. She danced from cabin to cabin, regardless of the dust that sprinkled her white muslin robes; and picturesque did those white cabins look, in the mellow lustre that now bathed them. The whitewashed walls, in the illusion of moonlight, had the smoothness and richness of marble; and the dark figures grouped about their steps might have passed for antique statues of bronze, or monuments of Egyptian art.

"What make Miss Katy so gay this night?" said Aunt Milly, who had some religious scruples against dancing. "She piert as a kitten. Somehow or other I think something going to happen. Looking-glass broke up in mistress's room to-day, nobody know how. 'Twas a sperrit, sure enough, and a warning. If we had an intarpreter like Nabunezzar, who told about the hand that figured on the wall, we'd know what it do mean."

"Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof, Aunt Milly," cried Katy, waltzing round her tall turban. "I suspect the spirit had a dusting-brush in its hand, and was looking at itself too hard, when the glass shivered. But hark! there's a breeze rustling among the leaves, and there is a cloud floating below the moon. We will surely have rain to-morrow."

The breeze which blew from the north raised such a cloud of dust that Katy was glad to escape into the shelter of the house, and when the family retired to their slumbers, they looked forward to a renovating shower. No one but Aunt Milly had a presentiment of evil, though it was brooding darkly and luridly over the fated mansion. All slept deeply, securely, lulled by the murmurs of the rising wind. But the deep sleep of Mr. Bellamy began to change to an uneasy slumber. He dreamed that he was in a trackless wilderness, in the midst of

midnight darkness, and that a heavy, roaring sound, as of wild beasts in the heart of that wilderness, weighed upon his ears, when the darkness was suddenly illuminated by a thousand blazing eyes, gleaming through the shadows, making a living and terrible conflagration. With a convulsive start, he shook off the nightmare under which he was gasping, and sprang up. He was awake; but the same dull, roaring sound was in his ears. He was awake; but the blazing eyes were glaring through the window, blazing tongues were curling and hissing abroad; and mingling with the roar were the cries, shouts, and shrieks of suddenly-awakened voices, while one loud as a trumpet and deep as a drum pealed high above the rest, "Master—master—fire!—fire!—wake up, master—wake"—

Mrs. Bellamy started from the bed with a scream of horror. The voice of Hannibal seemed rolling and echoing all round the room.

"Isabel! Isabel!" exclaimed Mr. Bellamy, who had thrown his dressing-gown round him, and rushed toward the windows to ascertain the extent of the calamity. "The flames are upon us! My God! how shall I save you? The staircase, it must be on fire!"

Seizing her hand and throwing one arm round her, for she was paralyzed with terror, he opened the door that led toward the stairs, when the hot, scorching air drove him backward. The flames that were roaring below came rushing and leaping upward, licking the banisters with their long red tongues, then darting them forward like fiery serpents, whose huge convolutions were rolling and doubling behind. The floor quaked beneath their feet, the glass shook, the walls vibrated. Mrs. Bellamy fell heavily on the arm of her husband. She had fainted.

"God of mercy!" gasped Mr. Bellamy, dragging her toward the open window, where the flames glared luridly on her pallid face; "I can't save her. She's lost. We are both lost. Poor Isabel!" Then with a sudden energy he lifted his voice, crying out, "A ladder! for the love of God, a ladder!"

Before the words had left his lips, a heavy sound, as of a

falling body against the wall, was followed by an apparition, that, seen at the open window, on the background of fire, so tall, so black, so powerful, with blazing eyes and gleaming teeth, it looked like an archangel of darkness, coming on pinions of flame. "Mistress! mistress!" it exclaimed; "Hannibal come to save mistress, or die too."

The faithful slave beheld the death-like face of his mistress drooping back from the arm of his master, and springing in through the window, he caught her, like an infant, in his strong arms, and disappeared, shouting, "Come along, master; come 'long, 'fore he burn up."

Mr. Bellamy looked out, and beheld Hannibal leaping from round to round of the ladder he had placed against the wall, the white night-dress of his mistress waving and fluttering against his black figure, the flames reflecting on both a supernatural glare. How he followed he knew not, but he reached the ground just as the ladder, that had tottered at every step, slipped and fell, and he found himself in the grasp of Warland, who was calling in frantic accents for his daughter. Katy slept in a room back of Mrs. Bellamy's, farther removed from the fire; her father in the room below. In his agonizing fears for his wife, Mr. Bellamy had forgotten poor Katy, and now he repeated her name in accents of despair. At that moment a piercing shriek from the window they had just quitted cut them through the heart, for there she stood, stretching out her arms, and they could see the hot flames behind, ready to leap upon her. The paralyzed hands of the father tried in vain to lift the heavy ladder, but swift as lightning Hannibal sprang into their midst, and adding his mighty strength, lifted it as if it were a feather's weight, threw it against the wall, and vaulting upon it, was instantaneously on the topmost round. Katy threw herself into his arms with a wild appeal to the mercy of heaven. Poor Milly, who always slept in the same room with Katy, but who had remained that night in the cabin of Hannibal's mother, who was suffering from the rheumatism, was perfectly frantic during her darling's danger. She rolled

on the ground, screaming, and biting the earth, in the impotence of despair. The negroes were rushing to and fro, doing all they could to save their master's property and check the progress of the flames. They had always been accustomed to follow the leading of Hannibal, and that he should have the glorious privilege of rescuing his mistress and Katy from death, seemed as natural as to see him at the head of the field, the first to plant, and the first to reap.

"Look a there," cried the black angel of preservation, pointing to the window above, while he bore Katy, who still clung trembling to his neck, toward the spot where he had left his mistress, "see him coming? Run away back, every one of you—way off; he fall, he kill you dead as stone. Master, come away; don't you see him"——

The fire was, indeed, now rolling in reddening volumes through every window of the house, and howling tempestuously within. The northern wall of the building began to rock, and lean, and part, and then fall with a terrible crash. The imprisoned flames leaped up to the very heavens, and went roaring above the old hickories, whose scorched and blackened trunks looked like gloomy pillars to a vast dome of fire. Nothing was now to be done but to gaze on the ruin, so awfully grand, while the element that was working such destruction was clothing it in such dread magnificence. The cabins on the south side of the house shared in the conflagration; those on the north, the direction from which the wind blew, escaped. The fire had evidently commenced in the northern wing of the building, and had gained the mastery of it before it was discovered. The wings were of wood, not brick, like the main body of the house, and being dry from a long exposure to unmitigated sunshine, kindled like a light-wood knot.

Hannibal had selected a strange place to bear his insensible mistress; but he believed, if the flames should cover every inch of Hickory Hill beside, it would leave untouched and unscathed the grave of Cora. He believed that the angels guarded it; he had seen them himself, with the eye of superstition, flit-

ting round it, and spreading out their white wings over the face of the monument, with a soft, rustling sound. It might have been the monument itself, that, gleaming white in the moonlight, Hannibal mistook for spreading wings. It might have been the sighing of the willow-boughs, and the long grass in the night-breeze, that he mistook for the feathery motion of an angelic plume; but his own belief was immovable as a rock, and when he laid his mistress by the grave of the poor mulatto she had endeavoured to save from the same destroying element from which he had just rescued *her*, he thought no harm could reach her there. Gently laying her down, so that her head rested on the green mound, he ran for water to revive her, when the shrieks of Katy and the frantic cries of her father again directed him to the burning building. A negro woman, who was hurrying about the cabins, like a distracted creature, throwing teacups and saucers to the ground, and hugging pillows carefully in her arms, caught a glimpse of the white-robed, prostrate figure stretched upon the grave, and screaming out, "A sperrit, a sperrit!" came very near rushing into the flames, to escape the spectre her own imagination had raised. It was her wild outcry, and the horrified glances she rolled over her shoulder toward the spot, that led Mr. Bellamy to know where his wife was borne, and he could not wonder at the terrors of the superstitious negro, when he looked upon her face, as cloudless as the stone near which she rested, and her long loose wrapper lying around her, like the folds of a winding-sheet. Raising her in his arms, he was bearing her from the melancholy spot, when he met Hannibal with the rescued Katy, whom he was bringing also under the outspread wings of Cora's guardian angels.

"No, master—please, master, don't take mistress 'way; no fire come here; no nothing to hurt. I bring water, I bring blanket; she no where else to go."

"Alas, alas!" exclaimed Mr. Bellamy, "it is too true. We have no shelter left. The cabins still standing would not be safe places of retreat."

Katy, whose senses, instead of forsaking her, had become intensified by the agony of fear, assisted Mr. Bellamy in the restoration of her benefactress. The water which Hannibal brought, and with which they copiously bathed her face and hands, soon recalled her to recollection and to a knowledge of the calamity that had befallen them.

"God be praised," were her first words, seeing her husband on one side and Katy on the other, while Hannibal, standing at her feet, intercepted the blaze of her dwelling. "My husband is spared—my own dear child!"

Hannibal, who had begun to fear that it was only the dead body of his mistress he had borne into that sacred inclosure, so long and deep was her insensibility, clapped his hands joyfully together, and the big drops came splashing down his cheeks, all glistening with perspiration.

"Who saved me?" she cried, sitting up, and looking round her with a bewildered air. "Ah, I remember now. It was you, my husband. You carried me down the burning staircase."

"No, Isabel; that passage would have been our grave. *There* stands the preserver of your life and mine, and hers too. We should all have been burnt to cinders now, if it had not been for Hannibal. *He* scaled the walls—*he* snatched you from the flames—*he* showed me the way of escape. Again he perilled his life for that poor shrieking girl, who was about to leap from the window, death behind and before her. Isabel, in the hands of God, *he* has been our Saviour. How shall we thank him? how shall we reward him?"

"I no want thanks. I no want any thing. I too happy already. My heart 'most ready to burst," cried Hannibal, drawing the back of his hand over his brimming eyes.

"Hannibal," said his mistress, leaning forward and extending her hand eagerly towards him, "Hannibal, come near me?"

The tall slave approached his still reclining mistress. He could not reach the hand she held towards him without kneeling, and with a sudden but not ungraceful genuflection, he bent

over her, while her pale fingers tried to clasp his hard and jetty hand.

"God bless you, Hannibal," she cried in a voice half choked with emotion, "and He will bless you. He will bless you in heaven. But, what shall we do for you on earth? Ask any thing of us—any thing left us to bestow. Freedom shall be yours, Hannibal, from this moment. I know your master's heart as well as my own. I speak for him too."

"Yes!" repeated Mr. Bellamy with warmth, "your heart does speak for me. Hannibal, you are free—your mother too. I wish I had a greater boon to bestow, and it should be yours."

The negro bowed his head on his breast, and wept aloud. The gentle Katy sobbed with him.

"I wish *I* had something to give you, Hannibal," said she, "but I will love you as long as I live."

"Don't talk so to Hannibal, mistress. Please, master; please, Miss Katy, don't. He can't stand it. He no want freedom. He stay with you all, all his born days; and when he die he want you to bury him 'long side of Cora, where he lay you down this night. Oh! mistress, when I see you put your hands in the live blaze to save poor Cora, I vow 'fore my Heavenly Master I'd die for you and master jist for that. Don't send me away. I work for you as long I live."

A slight shriek from Mrs. Bellamy startled them all. "My hand is covered with blood," she cried, holding out her dripping fingers. "Hannibal, it is yours."

"Me! mistress. Sure enough," cried the negro, holding out his right arm, from which the blood was now perceptibly flowing from the shoulder to the hand. "I no know nothing 'bout it 'fore."

It was evident that he had received a severe wound on the shoulder, probably from a piece of falling timber, but in the excitement of the scene was unconscious of the injury.

"Your mother's cabin still stands," said Mrs. Bellamy, "and it is so far from the flames we can venture there the

back way. Let us all go there, and we can dress Hannibal's wound. Poor fellow! to think he never knew it."

Grateful that any shelter remained to which they could turn, the houseless master and mistress of that late noble mansion sought the dwelling of the aged slave, who, forgetting her rheumatic pains in the horrors of the night, had been hobbling about trying to help the others. There Mrs. Bellamy bound up Hannibal's bleeding arm; then, overcome with fatigue and the anguish of her feelings, sank down upon the bed of his mother.

Desolate was the dawning of the morning. The rain, so long invoked as a blessing, began to descend on the smouldering ruins, making the "blackness of ashes" still blacker, and the thick gloom still more gloomy. The negroes crowded together in the remaining cabins, weary from their exertions and sad from their loss; leaning on their elbows, and gazing vacantly on the blackened walls and the fallen ruins. King, who had laboured faithfully for his master during the fire, and saved a valuable cabinet of papers at imminent risk; who had seen his own nice cabin burnt to ashes, sat mournfully by his coal-black Pinkey, who was sobbing over her misfortunes. He was terribly reminded of the fate of poor Cora, whom he had once so devotedly loved, and lived over the scene of his ill-starred bridal night.

Mr. Bellamy and Warland, sitting on a bed of cotton in the gin, thus sheltered from the rain, made plans for the future, and had already built in anticipation another and more splendid habitation.

Mrs. Bellamy and Katy were sleeping in each other's arms on the negro's comfortable bed. Milly had placed clean pillows under them, and spread over them a new white counterpane, treading on tiptoe lest she should chase their slumbers. Hannibal, whose arm became every moment more painful, but who disdained to give expression to his sufferings, leaned back against the wall, with his teeth pressed tight against each other, so that a groan could not escape that might wake his mistress.

It was in this situation Doctor Manning found them, who

being called out early on professional business, became aware of the misfortune of his friends, and hastened to proffer his services. He found the arm of Hannibal, which he was immediately requested to examine, had sustained a very serious injury. The doctor had felt a strong interest in this negro since the night he had made a clean conscience by confessing to him his secret sins; and now, when informed of his noble self-devotion, his interest deepened into respect and admiration.

"Why, my brave fellow," said he, "you have a very bad hurt here. How and when did it happen?"

"I don't know nothing 'bout it, sir," answered Hannibal. "Didn't know I was hurt till mistress saw the blood on her own fingers."

"But this threatens to be a serious matter," said the doctor, with a countenance so expressive of anxiety, Hannibal began to tremble—not from the dread of pain, but a more horrible dread, the loss of that strong right arm, the sceptre of authority among his sable brethren.

"Oh! doctor, you are going to cut off my arm. Good master doctor please, you not going to do no such thing. If I got to die, I must, but I'd rather die twenty times over than live with this here arm in the grave afore me, I had. I don't want to live no longer than I work."

"Be quiet, my good fellow," said the doctor, involuntarily smiling at Hannibal's look of unutterable horror. "My fingers are not knives. They cannot cut you. I hope and trust there will be no need of robbing you of such an honourable member as this."

"I die fust, doctor—'deed I will."

"We must keep down the inflammation," continued the physician, with an air of authority, which did not lose sight of kindness, yet claimed obedience from his subject. "You must be perfectly still, and be very careful of what you eat and drink."

"I starve 'fore I lose this arm," said the excited general.

"Why, Hannibal, I have not threatened you with the

loss of your arm. I only said it was a serious matter, and so it is."

"You look so sharp, doctor. You look as if you going to cut me."

The doctor laughed outright. Hannibal's interpretation of Doctor Manning's expression showed the power of association in a most remarkable manner. Nothing could be more genial than his countenance, more bland and gentle than his manner, but since he had been compelled to amputate the limb of one of Hannibal's black friends, he had looked upon him with fear and trembling. It gives us pleasure to say that his skill was availing in this instance, and that the noble arm of Hannibal was spared the terrible gash of the amputating knife.

Bellamy Place was at least two miles from the nearest plantation, but before noon, several carriages arrived, to bear the family to the homes of their friends. Mrs. Bellamy did not like to leave Hannibal, and indeed refused to do so; but Aunt Milly, who was the queen of nurses, promised to watch over him with the tenderest care, and she knew Dr. Manning would be assiduous in his attentions.

It was pleasant to be surrounded once more with all the comforts and elegancies of life, though no longer their own; to be clothed in nice and handsome garments, though not their own. All their wardrobe was burned. They had saved nothing from the wreck but their night-raiments that covered them. Most of the furniture, too, was destroyed; but the money and papers were saved. The cotton was spared; their negroes remained. The loss was comparatively small to what it might have been. Now they had leisure to reflect upon the manner in which the fire had been communicated. As it was still sultry, there had been no fire kindled in the house, and yet the north wing had taken fire, evidently in the lower part. Mr. Bellamy remembered smoking a pipe in that room before retiring to bed, and rapping out the contents of the bowl on the hearth. The wind must have blown a coal in contact with some combustible material, and thus lighted the wrath of an element,

which, like its antagonist, water, makes the most splendid of vassals, but the most awful of masters.

"I will never smoke another pipe while I live," exclaimed Mr. Bellamy, with remorseful energy—and he never did; but after a while the blue smoke of his fragrant Havanas curled gracefully round his head. A spark from a cigar might kindle a conflagration, too; but it was not a *pipe*, and he had not violated his oath.

It may be said by some, that Hannibal's selection of the place where he bore his rescued mistress, was the last the proverbially superstitious negro would have chosen. But though Hannibal had all the superstitions of his race, in this instance it was unaccompanied by fear. Had she been buried in some lone field, where the wild-brier was suffered to trail, and the reptile to crawl, he might have shunned it as haunted ground. But she slept so near his own cabin, where he could see her quiet bed, whenever he went out into the field in the morning, or returned to his evening rest. The hand of affection had made it so beautiful, and his mistress had talked to him so sweetly of Cora in heaven, Cora happy in her Saviour's pardoning love, and of the holy angels that guarded the place of her repose, that Hannibal grew to love it, above every spot of earth, and to believe he beheld with his actual glance those heavenly beings, keeping their nightly guard, whom his mistress only saw with the inward eye of faith.

When he had recovered the use of his arm, and commenced his labours, with even more than his accustomed zeal, Mr. Bellamy renewed the offer which had been rejected on the night of the fire.

"Your mistress gave you your freedom, Hannibal," said his master, "and I too repeated the gift with all my heart and soul. You refused to accept it then; but you were excited, and had not had time to reflect on the value of what you rejected. Once more I make you the same offer. I break your bonds. Hannibal, you are henceforth and forever free."

"And I must leave you, master?"

"To remain among those who have been your fellow-slaves, would create discontent, perhaps, and ill-will. Yes; but you could go back to your native country—that is, the country of your fathers. I can send you to Liberia, where a colony of your own colour is established, and where you may, perchance, be happier than you have ever been with me."

Hannibal spread both hands on the top of the shovel he was holding, and leaned his chin over on the firm platform, with his large, thoughtful eyes fixed steadily on the ground. He seemed to be revolving deeply the momentous question, so calmly and deliberately presented to him. At length, raising his head and drawing a deep inspiration, he said: "I been argufying the subject with myself, master, and I comes to this conclusion—I rather stay with you and mistress, jist as I be, and jist as you be, than go way off 'mong strange people, who know nothing and care nothing 'bout me, no more than the man in the moon. I've sometimes thought, when I been working and thinking, 'twould be mighty fine thing to be free, work jist when I pleased, and long as I pleased, and make a heap of money all for my own self; and if I'd had a hard master, as some niggers has, I'd a run off, and gone where the free folks live. But you allos been kind, and mistress too. When I sick you nuss me and pray for me. Doctor come and make me well. When I die, you bury me long side of Cora, and mistress and miss Katy come and cry over poor Hannibal, and say, 'Poor fellow—so sorry he done dead.' Way off yonder, they no care whether he live or die. No, master, I stay and work with you, Lord willing, long as I live."

Hannibal held out his Herculean hand, and Mr. Bellamy grasped it warmly, cordially, gratefully. He felt that he had a friend, a sincere, honest, true-hearted friend, in the devoted African.

"God bless you, Hannibal."

"God bless you too, master."

The general felt bound to his master ever after by a bond, stronger than that of slavery—a bond that never could be loosened.

CHAPTER X.

"Come, share my all, my own true friend,
My purse and heart divide;
I'll love and trust thee to the end,
Whatever may betide."—BALLAD.

BELLAMY Place rose from its ashes adorned with new beauty. It had lost, however, some of its depth of shade, for several of its noble hickories had bowed beneath the axe, after being scathed and blasted by the breath of the flame. The mansion was not completed internally, but a sufficient number of rooms was finished to furnish a pleasant and comfortable home for the lately exiled family.

Man loves to build, and to enter in; he loves to plan, and to execute; to improve on the labours of the past, to see in the forms of beauty and fitness growing out under his directing hand, the refinement of his taste, and the progression of his understanding. While the old mansion remained strong, comfortable, and handsome, Mr. Bellamy had no plea for erecting a new one. But since necessity gave the command, he had found excitement and delight in superintending a work in which the classic taste of his friend Warland greatly assisted him. Another reflection added to the satisfaction of Mr. Bellamy. He *had* experienced a domestic misfortune; the hand of chastisement had been laid upon him, gently, it is true, but he was no longer that strange anomaly—a man all sunshine. The cloud had come, had passed; he felt as if he had a better right to the returning sunbeams. Ah, what right has man to any earthly possessions? By what tenure does he retain the gifts of God?

"The spider's most attenuated thread
Is cord, is cable to man's slender hold"

on human joy or wealth.

There is an old adage, (and there is truth in these time-honoured sayings,) that "misfortunes never come singly." And a great poet has said, that "woes tread on the heels of each other." There does seem to be a gregarious principle in

the whole family of misfortune, and where one sad member has found admission, one by one the pale sisterhood come gliding in.

When Mr. Bellamy was in College, there was another young man, a southerner, and a Georgian, too, who entered at the same time; and during the four years of his college life, he was his classmate and friend. His name was Arnold. When the graduated students separated on the threshold of manhood, they pledged mutual faith and confidence, however widely their paths might be divided. Years passed, and Mr. Bellamy knew not the fortune of his friend, till he suddenly came in his neighbourhood,—that is, within twenty miles,—having purchased a plantation about that distance from Hickory Hill. Mr. Bellamy rejoiced in having an opportunity of renewing his youthful friendship, though he regretted to find that the world seemed to have had a hardening influence on his former frank and convivial companion. After a while, Arnold requested his friend to become his security for a debt of some magnitude. Unhesitatingly was the signature given. When again a similar request was made, he did not shrink from this act of confidence. Arnold was considered a wealthy man, and an honourable man, and Mr. Bellamy was the most generous and confiding of human beings. About a year before the burning of Bellamy Place, Arnold once more called.

"This is the last time, Bellamy," said he, "that I am going to tax your friendship. I have an opportunity of making a splendid speculation, and it would be madness to slight it. In a few years I shall double all my property. The plantation and negroes I am now going to purchase belong to an estate contiguous to my own. If I do not buy immediately I shall be forestalled. I would not ask any one else to be my security; I know *you* consider it a compliment. I wish you would return it, Bellamy."

Mr. Bellamy had thus gradually become security for debts amounting to, at least, a hundred thousand dollars. Still he had no misgivings. He could not distrust, the world smiled on Arnold, and his splendid speculations all seemed to prosper.

Indeed, he had not the smallest doubt but that the first debts had been paid. The manner in which he had solicited the favour the last time, convinced him that his own mind was free from all pecuniary anxiety, and that his asking him at all was a mere matter of form. He had seen him once since the burning of his dwelling, and Arnold had expressed the most unbounded sympathy and regret, and urged him to come and remain with them till their house was completed. Mrs. Bellamy declined the invitation. She had never liked Arnold. She seemed to have an intuitive perception of his character, but as he was her husband's friend, his early college friend, she did not like to express her want of confidence in his moral worth. She could give no reasons for the conclusions to which she had arrived, but she *felt* it to be just.

One morning, while King was brushing his master's coat, with his light and practised hand, he entertained him, as he often did, with the news of the day.

"Master, you 'member Mr. Arnold, that used to come here and laugh so much? They say he gone off, and all his niggers. Nobody knows where."

Mr. Bellamy started.

"Ah! who told you so?"

"One of Doctor Manning's coloured folks, here, last night, and told me all about it. He says he owed his master, and he no quality folks, to run off without paying."

"Pshaw, King; don't repeat such nonsense. He may have gone a journey, but as for running away, it is out of the question. Mr. Arnold—impossible; I never heard of such a thing; impossible!"

"It's sure enough true, master. Doctor Manning knows. He heard of it, and went there to see. The house all shut up, and not a nigger to be seen, black or white, about the lot. I thought you'd like to hear it, master," continued King, flourishing his brush with fresh vigour. He felt the consequence of having communicated intelligence, that certainly agitated his master.

Mrs. Bellamy, who sat in a loose morning wrapper, braiding her hair, let it fall upon her shoulders. She little knew how deeply interested she herself was in this reported flight. She felt that vague satisfaction we are all conscious of having experienced, when facts confirm our preconceived and apparently groundless opinions.

"I suspect it is true," said she. "I never did have any confidence in that man. I am sorry, on your account, that he is gone, and in such a disgraceful manner; but I did not think it would affect you so much. Why, you really look pale, agitated."

"King, saddle my bay horse," said his master. As soon as he had left the room, Mr. Bellamy continued, "I have reason to look pale, Isabel. It may be that we are all ruined. Heaven forbid, though, that you should suffer through any deed of mine." Then he related to his wife all his transactions with Arnold, and his fears that a man who could leave the country in that clandestine manner, would not hesitate to involve his friends in ruin.

"But it is only the last debt that I have any misgivings about," he added. "The first I know are paid. I will go over and see Doctor Manning. I will investigate the matter. We must find some clue to his new home."

Mr. Bellamy mounted his bay horse, without waiting for breakfast, and rode away with an anxious and troubled countenance. He returned at night, weary and depressed. Arnold had indeed gone—had been gone nearly a week, as it was supposed, though the time of his departure could not be ascertained; and he could obtain no clue by which to follow his course. Doctor Manning, to whom he was deeply indebted, and who heard accidentally of his sudden exodus, had been making earnest enquiries, and all that he had learned was of the most unsatisfactory nature. Mr. Arnold's plantation was isolated, being separated by a long sweep of pine forests from his nearest neighbour. He had purchased the one next his own, when he last complimented Mr. Bellamy by requesting him to stand sponsor to the deed. No situation could be more

favourable for a clandestine departure; and whether he had gone to the winding banks of the Mississippi, or the gulf-washed shores of Texas, or any other of the luxuriant regions where slavery could find a home, it was in vain to interrogate. Mr. Bellamy soon ascertained the full extent of his responsibilities. Arnold had paid none of the notes that bore his signature. The whole immense weight of debt rested on him. In the existing circumstances he stood a ruined man. All he asked was time—time till every measure that wisdom and prudence might suggest and energy execute, had been taken to discover the retreat of his treacherous friend, (so justly named after the arch-traitor of his country,) and throw back upon *him* the responsibilities he had so dishonourably imposed on another.

He would have commenced an immediate pursuit, but while he was travelling in one direction, Arnold might be winging his way in another, and thus the distance between them be only increased. Mr. Warland was indefatigable in his exertions to find the route of the fugitive, and was absent many days in his fruitless search. He had written to his son a full statement of the pecuniary embarrassments of his benefactor, and waited with anxiety his reply. It wanted only a few months of the time marked out for the completion of his studies, and for his return to the sunny South.

The return of Marcus had been anticipated by the family as a kind of social millennium. Mr. Bellamy's large and generous heart had been expanding and glowing with the hopes associated with his adopted son. He would establish him in the world, with all the munificence he would have done a son who bore his name, and would perpetuate its honours. Thus relieved from every sordid care, his brilliant talents should bear him, and light him up to the heights of fame, and he himself would rest happy in the proud distinction of having assisted in the development of his mind of beauty and strength, of having given it opportunity and sunshine, the means to acquire, the power to enjoy, and the station to influence. *Now*, what could he do for Marcus? With a sudden and

crushing weight of debt incumbent on him, which might involve the contingency of selling his slaves, those sable children of his care, he could no longer indulge in the luxury of benevolence.

Mrs. Bellamy, timid and delicate woman that she was, the tender and indulged child of prosperity, contemplated with more fortitude than her husband their darkened prospects. She was more sanguine, more hopeful, more certain that every thing "would work together for good" at last.

"I am sure," she would say, in her sweet, assuring accents, "that we shall discover where your false friend has hid himself. The creditors are all honourable men, who will not oppress you. They will give you *time*, and that is all you want. Two or three years of harvest as abundant as the last, will enable you to pay the whole. We may have to economise, it is true; but household discipline will do us good. Ah! but Marcus—you say. Well, Marcus is now prepared to battle with the world. With his splendid natural endowments, and the education you have given him, he has a capital to commence with, which the richest, proudest youth in the land might envy. I have no fears for him. You wanted to give our sweet Katy a handsome marriage portion! Katy is a fortune in herself; and he who does not think so, is unworthy of her. Cheer up! my husband. We shall remain an unbroken household yet; our sable families will not be scattered to the four winds of heaven. Faithful, attached creatures! bitterly should I mourn if such should be their ultimate destiny."

As the air softly insinuates itself below a body heavier than itself, and buoys it up above the earth to which it is sinking, so this gentle comforter sustained the spirit of her husband, and counteracted the gravitating influence of anxiety and care.

Beautifully has one of the sweetest poets that ever sang, described the influence of adversity on the human heart. It is indeed only in the night-time of our being that the stars of Love, and Hope, and Faith come out with their divine radiance, setting a crown of glory on its darkness. It is only the

wounded heart that yields the richest fragrance of affection. It is only the bruised spirit that exhales celestial balm. The buds of the odoriferous Calæanthus are scentless as the acorn, till crushed by the hand that plucks them. Mr. Bellamy thought of these things, and was comforted. The fidelity and self-devotion of Hannibal were displayed on the fiery background of his burning dwelling—splendid relief for a glorious picture! The sweet disinterestedness and resignation of his wife shone forth on the cloud that treachery had rolled above him. The gratitude and heroism of the son of his adoption would yet be written in gilded characters on the same gray tablet.

Nearly two years from the night that Marcus and Delaval parted from Florence, in the little red-curtained library, they approached, about the same hour, the beautiful suburbs of Wood Lawn. They entered the gate, rode round the semi-circular gravel road that led to the house, guided by the bright light that streamed like a beacon through the scarlet drapery of the window. The heart of Marcus throbbed audibly in his bosom. Delaval uttered an exclamation of delight. Just as the carriage stopped, a girlish figure intercepted the rays of that beacon-lamp, the folds of the curtains were gathered hastily back, a radiant face flashed for a moment, like the evening star, on their vision—then disappeared.

In an instant the door was opened. The music of light footsteps was heard. The star-beams of bright eyes were seen; and *Florence—L'éclair*, as she was simultaneously called by the two friends, was in the arms of both. In that moment of joy, so intense as to be allied to anguish, Marcus remembered his own daring lines—

> Be mine the lightning's arrowy gleam,
> Though death be working in its dart,
> I'd bask beneath the scorching beam,
> And bind it burning to my heart.

He felt the realization of his prayer. He had indeed climbed the mountain steeps of fame, he *clasped in his arms the electric flame*, and knew *that its radiant glories* might one day be his. Florence, who with the wild impulse of joy had flown to meet

the travellers, thought not that others might also hear the coming wheels, and hasten to greet them. She had forgotten the existence of her stately aristocratic uncle; of the mild but prosaic Mrs. Lewis. Thought, feeling, memory, were for the moment all fused in the lightning, whose incarnation she was.

Very cold, and stately, and formal was the greeting Mr. Alston awarded to Marcus. The threatened insolvency of Mr. Bellamy had reached the inmates of Wood Lawn, and his adopted son no longer found favour as such in the eyes of one who was so exceedingly careful to have *irreproachable* companions for his nephew and niece. He had witnessed with overwhelming astonishment and sovereign displeasure the meeting between him and Florence, and determined that very night to exercise his authority as a guardian, and forbid all farther intimacy, or even intercourse. The co-heiress of Wood Lawn should be taught more aspiring views, and the young Adonis placed on his true level. But all the ice-bergs of the polar seas could not chill the glowing heart of Marcus. He scarcely saw the stiff, perpendicular form that stood with glacial mien on the threshold; he was conscious of but one thing, the presence, the love of L'éclair, for thus his spirit baptised her. She stood now beneath the light of the chandelier, both hands clasped in those of her brother, her eyes upturned to his face, and flashing back the rays that illumined them.

"Why, Florence, what a magnificent girl you are," exclaimed Delaval, releasing one hand from her loving clasp, and pushing back the wild flowing ringlets from her brow. "I begin to think there can be such a thing as a handsome brunette. Warland, did you ever see any one so wonderfully beautiful in two years?"

"Oh! don't ask him," she cried, placing her hand, laughingly, on her brother's lips, to imprison the flattering words. "He never was guilty of a compliment, never—and least of all to me. Don't take away his sublime truthfulness. It is his greatest charm."

"No compliment could be so great in this instance as the

simple truth you admire so much," answered Marcus. "You are right in saying that you are the last person I should think of complimenting."

The words were not much, but the manner in which they were uttered gave them volumes of meaning. The bloom of the carnation glowed through the soft olive of her cheeks. They certainly presented a beautiful contrast as they stood side by side in the brilliant light that sparkled from above on the bright mirror of their faces, and which each reflected back to the other; she representing the warmth and resplendence of her own sunny South—he, the purity and vitality of the northern clime, whose breezes had given a tone of manliness to his face and form, wanting in the person of the youthful graduate. His hair, too, those glorious locks, seemed to have caught a shadow from the mountains, 'neath whose brow he had been so long resting, that softened while it deepened their golden splendour.

Mr. Alston, who had been absent a few moments, was struck on his re-entrance by the proximity of these two radiant figures, and the increasing danger of this juxtaposition.

"Florence," said he, in his cold, measured tone, with that insufferable wave of the hand he deemed so majestic and awe-inspiring, "you had better go and see if the supper is in a due state of preparation for these two young gentlemen. They have travelled far, and must by this time feel, in an uncomfortable manner, the cravings of hunger."

"Mrs. Lewis is attending to that, uncle—you know she is," answered Florence carelessly. "Sorry indeed should I be for the appetite of these young gentlemen, if they had no better dependance than me to supply their wants. Nor do I believe they are so very hungry yet. For myself, I am too happy to eat for a week to come."

"Miss Delaval," said her uncle, with deepening gravity, "will you favour me with your company in the library, while your brother and Mr. Warland partake of their supper, over which Mrs. Lewis will preside with due attention."

"Who is Miss Delaval?" cried Florence, shrinking with unconcealed repugnance from the proposed tête-à-tête. "There is no Miss Delaval here, I am sure, to her uncle, her brother, or her friend."

"Miss Florence Delaval knows very well whom I mean, and what I mean. If she does not see fit to give me her company in the library or any private apartment, she will force me to say in this presence what I shall be sorry to address to a niece of mine."

"You had better go, sister," said Delaval, "and entertain uncle, while Warland and myself dispatch our suppers. As you have both supped, we do not care about having you stare at us while we are swallowing our coffee and bread and butter. People never look interesting when they are eating, especially when they are hungry, and are apt to take rather large mouthfuls."

"Well, Mr. Alston, Miss Delaval will attend you to the library," cried Florence, with a countenance of such assumed solemnity that Delaval laughed outright; but Marcus bit his indignant lip, well divining the cause of the required interview, and scarcely able to restrain the impulse that urged him "to beard the Douglas in his hall," and assert his own native lordliness. The young men were summoned to supper. Florence led the way to the library.

Her uncle waved his hand towards a chair. She silently waved hers towards another, with a motion exactly resembling his own. The dignified gentleman was disconcerted.

"Niece!"

"Uncle!"

"I hope you do not presume to make sport of the justly offended feelings of your guardian and delegated parent. I ought not, however, to be surprised at any thing in a young lady who has made the exhibition I have witnessed to-night."

Florence seated herself deliberately in a chair, and folded her arms over her breast.

"Now, sir," said she, fixing her eyes steadfastly upon him,

"I am ready to listen with becoming gravity to the charges you are about to bring against me; ready to hear what you would be sorry to address to a niece of yours in the presence of others; ready to learn what exhibition you have witnessed that has prepared you for such surprising results."

"In the first place, Miss Florence Delaval, your reception of this young man was the most unpardonable thing I ever beheld. That the heiress of Wood Lawn, a young lady of such expectations and responsibilities, should so entirely forget the dignity of her station, her pride of ancestry, her great wealth and high character, and descend to the permission of such unwarrantable familiarity, I never would have believed, if ocular demonstration had not forced upon me the conviction of the disgraceful fact."

"Disgraceful!" exclaimed Florence, starting up, the *wounded crimson* rushing in torrents to her face and neck, and her haughty eyes emitting sparkles of fire. "How dare you thus insult me, sir? From my own father, were he living, I would not bear it. Disgraceful—unpardonable—unwarrantable—*disgraceful!* I tell you, sir, I glory in feeling all you consider my shame and dishonour."

"Is it possible? Is it possible?" repeated Mr. Alston, "that you have so little self-respect, so little regard for the opinion of the world. But if *you* have suffered yourself to be infatuated by the mere beauty of one so immeasurably your inferior in rank; if your *brother* blindly permits what it is his duty strenuously to guard against, *I* shall certainly exert my authority to the utmost, and forbid this young man all farther intercourse with one who, I am sorry to say, seems utterly unconscious what is due to herself or her friends."

"I defy your authority, sir, since you thus abuse it," she cried. "All the respect due to my mother's brother I have ever paid you. For the care you have taken of my interests and property I have been duly grateful, but you never had, and never will have, any authority over my affections. If you knew me a little better, you would discover that the very

attempt to restrain them only gives them greater strength and power. Marcus Warland my inferior—your inferior—any man's inferior! I should like to have you to prove it, sir. The time will come, when he will soar so high above you, even in rank, that you will feel honoured by his slightest notice. Beauty!" repeated she, with a smile of disdain. "I hope I am above being infatuated by mere beauty; but the strong will, the lofty spirit, the generous heart, these are fascinations whose power I am not ashamed to own, whose power has made me what I am."

"You are a very self-willed and unmanageable young lady; that is what you are."

"Well, uncle, I am just of age now—George is of age; you are not obliged to trouble yourself any longer with the management of my rebellious will; you seem to have forgotten this circumstance."

"I did not expect such an ungrateful return for all my care," said Mr. Alston, walking with stately steps the length of the library, then turning to retrace them, "I thought I had inspired some little affection, some faint respect, but I see I have been mistaken. Long years of watchfulness and anxiety are forgotten, as though they had never been."

"No, no, dear uncle, they are not forgotten," exclaimed Florence, springing forward and seizing his unwilling hand in both her own; "I may be wilful and unmanageable, but not ungrateful; oh, no. You *have* been very kind to two orphan children, indeed you have. I would not be disrespectful, or independent of your authority; but when you say such terrible things, as you have to-night, you turn my blood to flame, and I know not what I say. I really feel as if there were a deep scar here," added she, putting her hand to her forehead, "a blistering one. But let us understand each other fully; for I would not, willingly, pass through another scene like this. That you may not believe that I have been actuated to-night by a bold and unmaidenly impulse, I will show you proofs of a long and heart-felt communion." Opening a rosewood cabi-

net, she took out a packet of letters, tied with a blue ribbon, and continued,—"These letters, dear uncle, I have received from Marcus Warland, under cover of my brother's, while he has been resident in a northern clime. These letters I have answered under the same fraternal authority. For two years our minds, hearts and souls have been holding the closest, the most sacred communion. For two years I have been feeding on the heavenly wisdom of his written words, and growing in mental grace and purity. Oh! these letters," she exclaimed, with a kindling countenance, apparently forgetting whom she was addressing, and pressing them with an impassioned gesture against her heart, "how they have exalted and purified my inmost being! They are the transcript of an angelic nature; the breathings of an immortal spirit. Can you blame me, because my soul bounded to meet the soul that had been transposed, as it were, into my own? That my heart sought the heart that governed and ruled my own, even when mountains heaved and rivers rolled between us?"

Mr. Alston gazed upon the spirited, passionate beauty of his niece with feelings kindred to awe. There is a sublimity in passion, which even the coldest natures are constrained to acknowledge. He felt himself baffled, resisted. He had expected to intimidate, by an unwonted exercise of power. He was himself controlled by an influence he could not understand. Once before, he had bowed before this young girl's will, when he would have compelled her to accept the addresses of Pellam, for whom she cherished the most sovereign scorn. Like Acre's valour, he felt his authority *oozing* gradually away, having effected nothing but a few blustering and pompous speeches. Florence saw and triumphed in her power, but she was too generous to do it openly.

"Am I released, uncle?" asked she, with a sweet, exacting smile. "It is so long since I have seen George."

"I see it is useless to detain you," he answered. "I have fulfilled my duty conscientiously and irreproachably. If you are indeed beyond my authority, and reject my counsels, you

must abide by the consequences, whatever they may be. But be assured of one thing, niece, I never will give my consent to an ill-assorted marriage,—*never*."

"It never shall be asked, uncle, be assured by me," cried she; "*never*. And now, if you are tired of my company, I will not detain you, for, if you please, I would rather remain here for the present."

Seating herself on the window-seat, she veiled her face with the curtain, while her uncle walked into the parlour with slow and creaking steps. Marcus and Delaval were walking in the piazza, impatient for the termination of the conference. The library window opened into the piazza, and the moment they saw the dark ringlets twisted with the scarlet folds, they eagerly approached. There was a bench outside of the window, on which they seated themselves, while Florence sat within, the lamp-light behind her, the starry heavens before her, with certain living stars mingling their beams with those that glittered in the sky.

"So you liked the north," said she, addressing both. "You became naturalized, acclimated, domesticated there. You have returned, I know, with divided hearts. How many times have I been wishing for a pair of fairy wings to bear me to the top of those empurpled mountains, to the banks of that magnificent river, and more than all, to the charming home of that dear, delightful Judge Cleveland. Did you tell him you had a sister, who had fallen irretrievably, inextricably in love with him from a two-fold description? I think you said Mrs. Cleveland was a frail, delicate woman."

"Most inveterately healthy and invariably charming, and intensely devoted to her excellent husband," answered Delaval. "The North is a glorious country. I honour its institutions, I respect its inhabitants, and love even its snows and icicles; but better do I love the soft and dewy South. I would not exchange its balmy blossoms for the diamond icicles of the North, nor its genial gales for the Hyperborean blasts."

"You had some strong prejudices to encounter," said Florence. "I hope you always wielded victorious weapons."

"Here stands the champion of the South," said Delaval, laying his hand on the shoulder of Marcus. "I wonder his laurels do not smother him. The clouds of prejudice have rolled away before the sun-bursts of his eloquence, as the mists of the valley before the rising day."

"Do not make a noble cause ridiculous by exaggeration," cried Marcus, "or give me all the laurels, which should, by right, be divided between us. I think we have both done much towards dissipating erroneous opinions, cherished toward our southern institutions. It is astonishing how little is really known of our domestic manners and relations, when so many northerners live and dwell among us; and it is surprising, too, that while the sons and daughters of the North are scattered all over our genial soil, deriving wealth and happiness from its fertile bosom, so few children of the South plant themselves on the granite hills of New England. They go, as we have done, to drink of the thousand streams of knowledge that flow from their fountain-heads of science and literature; but having quenched their thirst and invigorated their spirits, they return once more to the well-springs of the heart that gush forth to meet them, in their own fair sunny land."

While Marcus was speaking, Delaval had risen and sauntered down the gravel walk, picking up the white pebbles that glimmered in the star-light, and throwing them across the dewy grass. One would have supposed, from his careless motions, that he scarcely knew of what he was thinking; but he was well aware of the subject of his thoughts. If he looked up to the deep blue of the night-arch, it reminded him of the sapphire eyes of Katy; if he noticed the boughs of the Acacia swaying in the breeze, it recalled her graceful figure floating on the music of the dance. The roseate daughters of the North, charming as they were, had not won his allegiance from the blue-eyed maiden, with the magnolia cheek and the willowy eye-lash.

In the mean time Marcus and Florence continued their conversation, by the shadow of the curtain, and it seemed to deepen in interest, for he lowered his voice and bowed his head, till his bright locks mingled with her jetty ringlets, and his breath lingered on the roses of her cheek. He told her of his plans for the future, his hopes and expectations. He spoke not of fears—he knew them not. He was resolved to give no rest to body or mind, till he had discovered the man who had defrauded his benefactor, and forced him to liquidate the debts, whose burden he had imposed upon another. This was a holy duty—a duty of gratitude, he had bound himself by a vow to perform. He had no doubt of success.

"I *can* find him—I *will*—if God spare my life," he added; "and then I shall seek for that spot, on this broad, green earth, the Creator has marked out as the vineyard of my soul. When the vintage is ripe, and I have trodden, a little time, the wine-press in my own strength, I will build a bower for my beloved, where I can rest with her, when weary of the heat and burden of the day. It must be a beautiful bower, covered with flowering vines and wreathing foliage, sheltered bravely from sun and wind, before I can ask her to share it with me."

"Supposing she has already a bower of her own, all covered with blossoms and bonny-spreading shrubs," answered Florence, blushing at her own ingenuousness; "why not let it furnish a shelter for you, from the winds and storms of life, instead of roaming for a fairer spot, which perchance you might never find?"

"No, Florence—noble, frank-hearted girl that you are. No, L'éclair. Knowing myself to be as high above all mercenary motives as the heavens are above the earth, and believing in my power to win your affections and secure your happiness, I have loved and wooed you—you, a wealthy heiress—and I, with naught but what nature and education have bestowed. So certain am I of being able to offer you independence and an honourable name, if life and health remain,

that I have not the selfishness to wish you poor that I may prove my disinterestedness and my love. The time will come, when even your haughty uncle will deem it no derogation of his dignity to seek the hand now clasping your own."

"I believe it—I know it, Marcus," said Florence. "It is this full, glad consciousness of your own powers that triumphed over my despotic will. Were you timid and distrustful, I should still be the haughty, capricious damsel, who sprinkled your fair locks at the brink of the fountain."

The mild aspect of the summer-night tempted them abroad, and they followed Delaval down the gravel walk. Two beautiful trees clasped their green hands over the gate, and seemed to toss up the young moon, that hung in argent beauty just between them. The songs of the negroes were wafted to their ears, mingling with the soft, dreamy buzz of the insect world in the air. It is not strange, as Marcus was to leave by morning light, that they lingered till the silver crescent was seen high up, in the darkening dome of midnight.

The next morning Florence found the following lines, in one of the folds of the crimson curtain. They might have been blown there, by the breeze of night, for she had forgotten to close the window of the library:

"When o'er youth's morning sky I saw
The arrowy *Lightning* play,
My spirit owned th' electric law,
And mingled with its ray.

The stellar glory of the night,
Its lunar beams how cold!
I worshipp'd—but the crimson light
The thunder-clouds enfold.

But now methinks yon silver bow
A fairer type of thee,
Who swayest passion's ocean flow,
As the sweet moon the sea.

Like her, thou shinest on my soul—
How high the rushing tide!
But, far from thy divine control,
The swelling waves subside.

Thou waxing glory of my night,
Unlike yon silver bow,
Thou shalt emit perennial light,
Nor change nor waning know."

CHAPTER XI.

Ye go—but I follow—for fleet is my steed,
The wings of the wind scarce outstripping its speed,
With the eye of the eagle thy covert I'll ken,
I fear not thy strength, nor thy strong, merry men.—ANON.

MARCUS arrived at Hickory Hill, and all the shadows that had been gathering over it seemed to flee before the sunshine of his presence. To the black as well as the white, it was a jubilee of the heart, for Marcus was a favourite of all, and Milly, as she looked upon him with the signet of manhood on his brow, felt as if the ancient honours of their house were all restored in him. She was elated too by the prospects of her young mistress, for Katy, in the simplicity of her young and loving nature, had not been able to conceal from this faithful friend the secret of her heart. When she had read to her passages from her brother's letters, Milly's cunning eye could always detect another letter partially concealed in the throbbing bosom, whose pulsations it hurried, and she overheard Marcus telling his sister that *he* was coming very soon. "Yes, sweet Katy," said he, "he bid me say, that before the bud of the rose should open and fade, he would be where his heart already is."

"And now," muttered Milly to herself, while she busied herself with the work, "Miss Katy will soon ride in her carriage, just as mistress used to do 'fore ole master drank up all his money and 'sessions. Young master, that Miss Katy loves, got a heap of property, I knows, and Milly will live with her young mistress, and wait on her, and nuss her childer may-be, as she did her, for childer are like olive plants, all polished in the corner, as good ole Simon used to say."

But Katy thought not of fine carriages or fine houses. She thought only of the generous heart given in exchange for her own. She was happy in the consciousness of being beloved and of loving. Were Delaval poor, with nothing but a log cabin to offer her, she would have felt equally happy, perhaps

more so, for in her lowly self-estimate gratitude was as strong as her love. Far different was she from Marcus. The contrast in their characters was visible in their countenances. While her glance, in soft humility, usually sought the ground, his, with eagle ambition, was naturally lifted towards the sun. *He* felt no gratitude to Florence, because she being an heiress loved him for himself alone. His love enriched her, as well as hers him. It was not the heiress he loved, but the being, all heart and soul; and the mere accident of her wealth weighed nothing in the estimation of her worth. Were he master of millions, he would not be elevated in his own opinion; were he utterly destitute, he would not be degraded. When a boy, he had learned to separate himself from outward conditions; to look upon himself as a God-endowed, though man-neglected child. He had felt more proud of his heaven-born riches, when he wove his osier baskets, by the blaze of a light-wood knot, than when the oaken garland was cast at his feet mid the thundering plaudits of an admiring audience.

With the promptitude and energy that marked his character, he resolved to take immediate measures for the discovery and apprehension of the traitorous and fugitive Arnold. He saw the cloud of anxiety on the usually serene brow of Mr. Bellamy, and he rejoiced to think that he might be the instrument to disperse it. Wait! No, that was impossible. He was no longer a boy to care for holiday pleasures. He was a man, ready to fulfil manhood's loftiest duties. And then he had his own vineyard to cultivate, his bower to build; not in the valley, but on the table-land of the mountain top, in the full warmth and splendour of an equatorial latitude. He had marked out his work, and he had not only the mind to conceive, but the spirit to sustain, the heart to encourage, and the hand to execute.

With indefatigable zeal he collected all the documents necessary to invest him as agent plenipotentiary for his benefactor He visited the most distinguished lawyers, obtained the most powerful judicial advice, and made himself master of the

subject in all its bearings and relations. He had a certainty that Arnold had directed his course to Texas, then the lone star in the national firmament, towards which the eyes of outlaws and criminals were turned as the orb of hope and promise. He had heard of several farmers who had sold their plantations, believing they had exhausted the riches of the soil, and removed to the luxuriant, and as yet uncultivated lands fertilized by the waters of the Colorado. To Texas he determined to bend his course, and when every thing was prepared, one fine, bright, inspiring morning, mounted on a spirited horse, with a green blanket and well-filled valise strapped on behind him, and an ample supply of money about his person, he commenced his expedition. The ferryman's cabin lay right in his path, and Marcus was not sorry to visit once more the scene of the stern discipline of his boyhood.

Once more the sweet murmuring voice of the Long Moss Spring welcomed him to its margin. Once more the splendid-leaved magnolia swept its boughs over his head, while its magnificent blossoms unfolded their waxen bosoms to the air, and perfumed it with their intense odours. The feathery moss still curled over the bed of the fountain, green in the sunshine, blue in the shade; and pure and white gleamed the rocks through the clear, gurgling waters. As Marcus gazed around with that fullness of heart this scene ever caused, he beheld, not far from the spot where he stood, a mound, covered with grassy turf, of that peculiar oblong form which indicates the last resting-place of man. He remembered his friend, the aged Simon, whom two years before he had seen bowed over the fountain's edge, and he was sure he was slumbering in that quiet bed. While he stood with pensive brow and folded arms, looking down on the green sward, the ferryman's wife, the same woman who had lent him the blanket, and assisted in ferrying the boat over the moon-lighted waves, approached the fountain, with a wooden bucket, poised in the African style, on her uncovered head. She started at the sudden apparition, but soon recognised the handsome youth, who had seemed so

like an angel to her, slumbering in the moonbeams. After having greeted her with his wonted courtesy, he questioned her about his old African friend, and learned that he indeed slept his last sleep near the murmurs of the fountain, whose music had so often soothed his aged ears. He was found dead by the side of the spring, with his face turned towards the waving moss, as if his soul went floating down the silver current into the neighbouring river, and thence into the great ocean of eternity. It had been his reiterated request to be interred near that spot, and the scene of his death became the place of his burial.

"I didn't mind it at first," said the woman, "for I didn't know how lonely it would make the place seem. But now, when I come down at night for water, I dare not look on that grave, and yet I see it all the time. I hurry back as fast as I can, and then I hear old Simon hobbling behind me all the way."

"Poor old Simon!" exclaimed Marcus, with glistening eyes. "You need have no fears of him. He was a true-hearted Christian, with a soul as white as that snowy basin. As sure as there is a heaven, where suffering man finds rest, he has found admittance there. He is no restless ghost to inspire terror in those he has left behind."

"Some time before he died," said the ferryman's wife, "he gave me a little packet, wrapped in buckskin, sewed up tightly all round, which he wanted me to give to you, whenever you came this way, for a woman named Milly. I'm glad you've come, for I kind of hated to keep it. Dead folks property is a mighty sacred thing; when it is fastened up so close, too, it seems more particular."

While she went to the cabin to get the mysterious packet, Marcus indulged his sincere and heartfelt sorrow over the grave of this devoted friend of his desolate years. How short a time it seemed since he, a mere boy, sat at his side, watching him peel the bark from the smooth willows with his wrinkled hands, while he dropped luminous texts of scripture into the listening

ears of Milly, or sang with growing enthusiasm, "The old ship of Zion, glory, hallelujah."

There was a smooth white stone lying close to the grave, such as formed the basis of the fountain. Marcus knelt down, and taking his penknife, carved the name of the old soldier on its yielding surface; then placing it at the head of the grave, he pressed the earth against it, to prevent it from falling. He felt an irresistible desire to consecrate the spot by some act of memory, some token of human friendship. The ferryman's wife returned while he was engaged in this touching rite of remembrance to the lowly negro, and she thought that she should never again fear to approach it, even in the darkness of midnight. In silence she placed the packet in his hand, then, when he turned away, she said,—

"There is a wild rose-bush yonder; if you like, I will plant it by that stone, and I will see that it does not fall. If the moss should grow over it, I will clear it away from the name you have cut."

"God bless you," exclaimed Marcus; "you have a feeling heart; I honour you for it. Yes," added he, to himself, as he led his horse toward the ferry-boat, which had just reached the shore, "this woman has native refinement and sensibility. I am glad she dwells near my beloved spring. There is something in its placid, silvery beauty, in its deep continuous music, that creates responsive beauty in the heart that is bathed in it. I never approach it without feeling my immortality, my eternity. My father's soul, after going through a baptism of fire, here found the river of life. Poor old Simon, no doubt, here held communion with the Great Invisible, whose image he beheld in the far depths of the waters. Beautiful fountain of my boyhood!" continued he, casting one more backward glance, as he stood on the brink of the river. "My being seems coeval with thine; I listen to thy murmurs, and feel as if I had forever heard them sighing, breathing, mingling with my soul; I watch thee swelling, flowing onward, onward —never wearying, never pausing; full, exhaustless, deep, and

clear; and I feel as if thus my existence had ever been flowing onward, onward, and ever would flow, as long as God's eternal days shall last. Oh! when I have realized the lofty dreams of my ambition,—when my spirit has wrestled, and battled, and triumphed in the conflict with the stormy elements of the world, let me come and bathe my thirsty lips in thy sweet tranquillizing wave; and when, like the time-worn African, I lay my head on the clay-cold bosom of our general mother, may thy lone, mysterious accents breathe forth my requiem, and thy silver gushings beautify the place of my repose."

Lost in his meditations, he had not observed that the ferryman's wife was assisting her husband in urging the boat across the river. But the moment he became aware of this circumstance, he grasped the pole, though she laughingly endeavoured to retain it.

"And thou, rejoicing river!" thought he, bending over and watching the resisting waters gurgling and foaming round the opposing staff, "thou, too, seemest a part of my own existence. Strong and glad and triumphant like thee, I go on my course, receiving tributary streams of strength from all things around me and about me. The breeze that rimples thy surface moves over and refreshes the stream of my thoughts, and the sunbeams that flash on thy ripples play and sparkle over my spirit's restless waves. We are one, O rejoicing river; we ever have been, and ever shall be one."

When he had landed, shaken hands with the woman, whose promise about the rose-bush had raised her so much in the scale of being, and ascended the steep bank, he felt as if he were at the starting point of his journey. He girded himself anew for the enterprise, watching, with Indian sagacity, every thing that could indicate the route of the fugitives. He had made inquiries of the ferryman, but they had elicited no information.

The weather was mild and clear, and as he swept along through the pine woods, inhaling their healthy and inspiring

odour, catching glimpses of the effulgent blue of the heavens through the green dome above, and here and there the sparkling of bright waters by the wayside, and the flow of the runnel across his path, he felt the joy of a young traveller, and thought himself incapable of fatigue. But when after several days continuous riding, without having met any adventure, or any clue by which he could direct his course, his buoyant spirits began to lose a little of their elasticity. It was probably owing to the electricity gathering in the clouds that rolled round the setting sun, and deepened the gloom of the twilight hour. Many who, like Marcus, have their beings charged with the electric fluid, feel, on the approach of a thunderstorm, as if it were withdrawn from themselves to give power and destructiveness to the elements, an oppression, an attraction toward the earth painful and irresistible. Marcus was wont to associate the idea of Florence with the lightning's flash, and he always hailed its coruscations with rapture,—but, as she herself had told him, it was rather the lambent glory that sports silently on the horizon's edge, than the blaze that heralds the thunder's crash, that was the emblem of the electric L'éclair. Deep into the night he rode through the gathering storm, for the place to which he had been directed for shelter was still far ahead, and he began to think he had turned into the wrong road. At length his horse, dazzled and scared by the lightning, stopped short, and refused to proceed. He perceived, at the same time, a hut, a little removed from the wayside, which he thought might furnish shelter for the night. He could see a gleam of light through the wooden shutters, and concluded that it was inhabited; so, obeying the instincts of the horse rather than his own, he dismounted, and led the animal toward the hovel, guided by the lightning's flash. Fastening his horse under the stoup that projected toward the road, he opened the door and looked round the dark, unfurnished apartment, that was partially illumined by a flickering blaze in the chimney. A frame, which was probably erected for a bedstead, stood on one side; a pile of old planks was placed diago-

nally resting against the front and one end of the building, and all the shadows gathered in the vacuum behind this rude rampart. Marcus gazed with surprise on the fire burning on the lone hearth, the only sign of inhabitancy in the desolate place. Perhaps some traveller had paused and lighted that blaze to cook a hasty meal, hurrying away from the storm that had so long seemed muttering behind. This idea was confirmed by a crust of bread and morsel of sweet potato lying on the hearth. Marcus threw another knot on the blaze, and spreading his blanket on the boards, while his valise served him as a pillow, he soon slept the sound sleep of the youthful traveller, though the rain drifted in torrents against the roof, and the thunders shook the timbers, and rattled the dust from the rafters.

"Ha!" exclaimed the sleeper, suddenly wakened by the falling of his head against the boards. "Ha!" springing up on his feet and making the old planks ring by the rebound. The pine-knot still sparkled with an intermitting light, and he could see, for his vision was clear, a black spectre leaping toward the door with his valise in his hand. While it was fumbling for the latch, Marcus, darting after it, imprisoned its arms with a grasp that made it cry out lustily for mercy."

"Oh! master—Lord a mercy—mercy! Please let go. I jist went to see what you had for pillow," cried the negro, his teeth chattering with terror, for Marcus had the strength of a young lion, and his gripe was like steel on his muscles.

"You were taking it out of doors to look at it, were you?" said Marcus, smiling at the terrified countenance of the negro, on which the fitful blaze made fantastic lights and shadows. "Come this way, and let me see what you are."

Dragging him, unresisting, toward the hearth, he perused the coal-black face, in which the eyes were revolving with inconceivable rapidity. There was a long, deep scar on the right side of the forehead, which gave a peculiar expression to the orb beneath. There was something in the face, the scar,

the facial angle, that gave him a vague and troubled feeling of remembrance.

"Hector!" involuntarily fell from his lips—"Laughing Hector."

"Yes, that be me," said the trembling negro. "Oh! Lord, how you know my name, master?"

"Did you ever have a master by the name of Warland?"

"Yes, master, that I did. Good master, too; but he fell a drinking; then he sell his coloured people. You know him, master?"

"Hector, would you rob your own master's son? Would you rob the son of your mistress, now laid in the grave?"

"Little master Marcus!" exclaimed the African, his sable features lighted with a gleam of recognition. "You don't say so. Grown so fine and strong, too," rubbing his aching arm. "Oh! young master, pray forgib Hector; he no know it be you. He jist wanted to look—to see—a"——

"Never mind, Hector. I hope you will have more respect for the next traveller you chance to meet, or you may fare worse than you do now. I am sorry to see you have forgotten your commandments, Hector. If I recollect right, my mother taught them to you."

"Yes, I think she did; long time ago, though."

"I am afraid your present master and mistress do not set you a good example. Who is your master?"

Hector rubbed his head, with a perplexed air.

"I got no master jist now; I run away."

"Bad case, Hector. But what is his name?"

"Master Arnold, he calls him."

Marcus felt his blood bound in his veins. Providence had directed him to that lone hovel. The lightning's flash was the flaming beacon to guide his track. That he should discover an old family-servant, though in the equivocal act of robbing him, was a most interesting incident; that he should be escaping from the very man of whom he was in search himself, and to whom he could certainly direct him, was in-

deed providential. Seating himself on the wooden frame, he drew from Hector a clear statement of all he was most desirous to learn. As we can probably give it in fewer words than the African, we will explain to the reader all he repeated to Marcus.

Arnold was indeed bound for Texas, as Marcus had supposed—what particular locality he had selected, the negro could not tell. He had sent on detachments of his slaves, under the charge of overseers, at different times before his departure, and they were all to meet somewhere on this side of the Mississippi river. Sickness had broken out among them, so that they had been detained on their journey, and there had been an evident spirit of rebellion among the negroes, who most of them had been compelled to sunder some tie of nature or of love. Hector, who had pleaded hard with his master to purchase his wife, so that she might accompany him, and had been coldly refused, started with hard and vindictive feelings, and a determination to run away the first moment he could elude the vigilance of his master. This he had done two nights before. He had sought refuge in the ruined hut from the terrors of the thunder-storm, where he had kindled a blaze and eaten the food some pitying slave had given him on the way. He had heard Marcus fastening his horse under the stoup, and concealed himself behind the planks, where he crouched till the young traveller was asleep, when "old Satan tempted," he said, "to see what young master got in his pillow." Marcus resolved to write to Mr. Bellamy, and inform him of the discovery he had made, and to send Hector immediately to Hickory Hill with the letter. He had no reliance on his fidelity; but as his wife lived in that vicinity, and as he assured him that Mr. Bellamy would reward him liberally, he hoped the intelligence would reach his benefactor, and relieve him of much anxiety. He gave Hector money to lift him above the temptation of stealing, and a written passport, which he might exhibit, if arrested on his way.

The storm had now subsided, and the thunder, low and sullen, rolled at an immeasurable distance. Too much excited

to think of sleep, Marcus resolved to push on, after having made Hector again repeat every minutia connected with the route he was to take. Hector, imitating the zeal and energy of the young man, determined to plunge out into the night also, thinking it better for a runaway to rest at noon in the deep woods, and avail himself of the curtain of darkness to speed his flight.

"Now, Hector," said Marcus, as they turned in opposite directions, "be faithful to your trust, as you hope for a liberal reward; and if you fall in with a sleeping traveller, have a little more respect for his head than you had for mine, and not deprive it quite so suddenly of a pillow. I really think there must be a contusion here," added he, passing his hand laughingly over the back of his head.

"I think there 'tusion on my arm, young master," answered Hector, shrugging his shoulders; "but me no right to complain. Me take great liberty, sure enough. Good-by, master. Give my best 'spects to master Arnold, when you see him."

The mocking laugh of the runaway rang through the damp air. Marcus remembered that laugh, though he had not heard it since he was a very little boy. Such a laugh never issued before from human lungs—so loud, so long, so voluminous, it burst from the mouth like a cannon-ball, and went rolling into space, echoing as it went, gathering sound and force, when suddenly it ceased, checked at once in mid-volley. This miraculous laugh had won him the name of "Laughing Hector"—a distinction of which he was very proud; and Laughing Hector had turned his peculiar talent to great account; for young men, and maidens too, were in the habit of paying him for one of his distinguished laughs, which were entirely independent of mirth or wit. When Marcus heard this magnificent laugh, rolling through the silence of the night, he could not help giving a merry response, while ten thousand reminiscences of life's earliest days were wakened by its echoes.

The next day a great misfortune befell Marcus. He deemed

it such, though it eventually proved a blessing. Ah! these blessings in disguise. How often the wayfarer of life meets them in his journey, and knows them not! The pilgrim sees not the angel through the garb that conceals him; in doubting and darkness he follows his mysterious guide, till a revelation of divine glory bursts upon his vision, and the ways of Providence are justified to misjudging man.

Just as he was approaching a comfortable looking dwelling, that promised shelter and rest for himself and weary horse, the animal stumbled and threw his rider on a rocky ledge, with a force that produced insensibility. Fortunately, he was near the dwelling of man, where he could receive the ministrations his helpless state demanded. No bones were broken, nor any serious internal injury received; but such was the violence of the fall it was impossible for him to resume his journey for several days. Marcus chafed with burning impatience under this unexpected delay. The nice couch on which he was laid gave him no more rest than Guatemozin found on his bed of coals. It was the first time he had ever been constrained to submit to a state of passive endurance, and at this moment it was agonizing to him. The fever of impatience kept him captive longer than he would have been, had he borne his confinement with calmness and resignation; but he was at length able to resume his journey, which he did with feelings of unspeakable gratitude.

"Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed, when once more pursuing his impeded course; "it might have been worse. I feel renovated, joyous, and my horse has renewed his strength. He bears me on with the fleetness of the antelope. Oh! for Mazeppa's winged courser—

> "Away, away, my steed and I
> Upon the pinions of the wind."

One flashing thought of Byron brought all the grand and gorgeous imagery of his poems before the mind of Marcus. He was no longer lonely. The woods through which he rode became thronged with wondrous travellers. The Giaour came

thundering on his raven steed; and Lelia "shining in her white symar;" the corsair with his "glittering casque and sable plume, more glittering eye and black brow's sabler plume;" followed by the dark-eyed Gulnare, and the fair-haired Medora; Selim and the lovely Zuleika; the dark cloud spanned by the rainbow; Lara, the being of "dark imaginings," with the unknown page linked with such fond devotion to his gloomy destiny; one and all, they rushed along with him, swift as the breeze that blew back his horse's flowing mane. Then the forest was converted into a grand picture gallery, where Shakspeare's wizard pencil drew immortal groups. From the witches of Macbeth, the ghosts of Banquo, to Oberon and Titania's fairy court, he saw them all. As the camel, when travelling the desert sands of Arabia, far from the river's flow and the fountain's gush, moistens his dry throat from the reservoir within, so he refreshed his loneliness from the well-springs of memory, and went on his way with a sparkling brightness of spirit, which even the long trailing, melancholy moss, which here and there hung its funeral drapery on the trees, could not sweep away.

CHAPTER XII.

"We rushed forward through night; we came to the roar of the stream, which bent its blue course round the foe, through trees that echoed to its sound." "Shall the son of Fingal rush on the sleeping foe? Shall he come like a blast by night, when it overturns the young trees in secret?"—Ossian.

It was a wild scene. The camp-fires were blazing along the edge of the woods. Baggage-wagons, from which the horses and mules were taken, served as tents for the sick and infantine travellers. Clusters of black faces were grouped together: the light reflected from their charcoal surface as from mirrors of polished jet. Dark, shining constellations they looked, scattered all about among the shadows that were here and there illumined by the intense radiance of the pine-torch light, and at intervals rolled together in an opaque, ebon mass.

There was an air of weariness, and sullenness, and discontent about all these groups. They looked travel-worn and soiled. Some were washing their blistered feet, others mending their torn garments. Mothers were endeavouring to hush the cries of their infants, trying alternately the effect of a caress and a blow, till, overcome with fatigue, they dropped asleep over the struggling burden in their arms. It is true, there were some blither notes in different parts of the encampment. Some young and India-rubber beings, the moment the strain of the day's journey was over, would dance and sing, to the scraping of the violin and the drumming of the tambourine. There were monkey-faced children cutting indescribable antics on the ground for the amusement of their elders, making somersets faster than the beholder could count; tying themselves apparently in double knots, and cutting themselves in two; then flying together again as if nothing had happened—juvenile Ravels, self-taught, flexible as whalebone, and graceful as the willow. These merry, elfish, supernatural-looking creatures relieved the monotony and weariness of the scene, and converted it into a gipsy revel. Pots simmering over the fire, and red handkerchiefs gleaming from the brows of the women, increased the resemblance to a Bohemian rendezvous.

A tent was pitched in the centre of this large encampment, where the master of these sable beings was reposing, after the toils of an itinerant day. A glass lantern, suspended by a cord from the apex of the tent, gave light to the interior, and streamed down on the face of the gentleman, who was reclining on a pallet of straw, attentively engaged in reading a newspaper. He looked haggard and uneasy, as well he might. Unforeseen difficulties had retarded his unrighteous expedition. Sickness had broken out among his negroes, and he had been compelled to linger for a detachment that had been ordered to meet him at a particular point. Then the runaway Hector might wake the bloodhounds of pursuit to scent his track. One of his overseers, after an angry altercation, had that very day left him with covert threats and malicious insi-

nuations. Let him but once cross the Mississippi. Let that mighty volume of water only roll between him and the friends he had wronged, he would feel safer and at ease. At ease! No! his conscience was not yet seared. He was not an old offender. He was naturally of a careless, convivial spirit, hating trouble and dreading poverty; but he was easily swayed by the will of others, and warped to evil his better nature would have shunned. The influence that should have been all-powerful for good was exerted for ill. He had married a few years before, for his second wife, a lady of a hard and worldly character; a widow of reputed wealth; and the mother of the young man Pellam, who had spoken so insultingly of Marcus at Wood Lawn. Marcus, though he had seen Mr. Arnold at Bellamy Place, was not aware of this connection, and as he had been absent for years, it was not strange it had never been alluded to in his presence. Mrs. Arnold had preceded her husband with some relatives who resided in Texas; her son travelled with his stepfather, was now the sharer of his tent, and seated on a camp-stool near the entrance, where the canvas was rolled up to admit the night air, that came fresh and dewy from the sweet southwest. Pellam looked dull and sleepy. The head he had borne so loftily in the presence of Marcus hung lazily on one side. He was playing with an open pen-knife, sometimes paring his nails, and sometimes sticking it through the canvas, for the mere pleasure of destructiveness. A leathern belt, containing a bowie-knife and pistol, girdled his waist. Arnold was also armed. Two white men, who seemed to be overseers, were walking about the encampment, which gradually became more still, till at length nothing was heard but the hoarse voice of the waterfall, leaping mid the current of the creek that washed the skirts of the woods which sheltered the place of their repose. The paper dropped from the hands of Arnold. Pellam threw himself on the pallet by his side. They both fell asleep. The rays of the lantern glared brightly on their faces. So has the warrior slept on the tented field, while the foe, whom he thought remote, was

coming armed with vengeance, making the obscurity of night subservient to his will. So has the doomed one slept, while the bolt that was to fall upon him was forged in the armory of heaven.

Arnold was awakened, but it was with no downy touch. A strong grasp was on his right arm. A firm hand pressed upon his breast. He struggled, panted, and threw off the pressure that held him down, but the grasp was on his arm, and a figure before his eyes that dazzled, bewildered him, and for one moment he believed himself arrested by superhuman agency. The eyes bent upon him were clear, serene, and of terrible brightness. They were like the noonday sunbeams, too intense to meet, and the face from which they beamed seemed enwreathed with a halo, so bright were the locks that floated round it. There was another figure by its side, taller, larger, darker—more of the earth, earthy. Arnold began to realize his situation.

"What, ho!" he cried, leaping from the pallet, and writhing to free himself from the hand of steel. "What, ho! Pellam, rouse, I say. Unhand me."

Pellam, who was in a leaden sleep, roused by the outcries of Arnold, sprang up and instinctively drew a pistol from his belt. Marcus recognised instantaneously the young man who had sought to degrade him in the eyes of L'éclair, and, previously excited, his blood boiled in his veins. He had never forgotten the insult, and he rejoiced that an opportunity now offered when he could grapple with him, and satisfy that stern sense of justice every man feels in the presence of those who have wronged him.

"Here," said he to the strong man at his side, "prevent his escape; the authority is in your hands."

Then surrendering Arnold to the officer of justice, he turned upon Pellam, who was aiming a pistol at his breast. Marcus wrenched it from his hand and threw it upon the ground. Pellam, though naturally cowardly, felt as if it were a life-struggle, and he hated Marcus, the successful lover of Florence,

with a deep and deadly hatred. Drawing his bowie knife, he made a fierce plunge at his antagonist, but only cut through the air. Marcus was unrivalled in the art of fencing, and though this was the first time he was ever engaged in mortal fight, he was more than equal to the strife. He was armed, but instead of drawing his own knife, he seized the wrist of Pellam, and the knife gleamed and glanced between them coldly, bluely, destructively, but colder, bluer, more destructive gleamed the eyes of Marcus on the face of his foe. The fierce delight that a brave man feels in deeds of strife quivered on his lip, and lighted up his features. He was transformed. There was a deadly beauty in his face. It might, indeed, be said of him at this moment, in the beautiful, hyperbolical language of the Canticles, "He was bright as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners."

In the mean time, Arnold was struggling manfully with the officer, who had come armed with legal authority to arrest him.

"What, ho!" again he cried, in vociferous tones. "Brandon—Peters—where are the rascals? Come to the rescue; I defy the warrant."

The men thus summoned, previously aroused by the tumult, came rushing into the tent, which soon became a battle-ground. The whole encampment was, by this time, a scene of indescribable confusion. The dogs were barking and howling, the negroes running to and fro, partly comprehending the deep interest they had in the conflict. A fortification of black figures was seen outside of the tent, growing broader and broader as the strife deepened. It was becoming fearfully exciting; four against two. The overseers were strong, rough men, well skilled in the use of the bowie knife and all destructive weapons. They were also initiated in the refined art of gouging, an accomplishment of frequent use in the butchery of man.

Marcus, who had thrown Pellam to the ground, and wrenched the knife from his grasp, rushed upon these men now bearing down upon the sheriff, who had been exerting all his strength

to retain his hold of the prisoner, desperate and struggling as he was. He did not want to shed blood, he did not want his own blood shed, but it was shed already. There was a gash in his left arm, and a red stream running over his hand. Marcus saw it, and the sight inflamed his passion with tenfold power. He fought with fury, but against fearful odds. He fought for life, for justice, for vengeance. He thought not whether he spilled blood or not. He had *right* and *might* on his side; but it was now three against one. Three! it was four; for Pellam had risen, Arnold was free; the officer reeled with failing strength. Marcus turned upon them all, like the stag at bay, believing himself lost, but strong, brave, unyielding to the last. There was a smile of defiance and scorn upon his lip. His eye was the lightning, flashing from the clear blue heavens. But listen,—other footsteps come rushing to the tent. The black wall gives way. A loud, thrilling cry! It is echoed by the negroes. More enemies! He is lost. But hark! he knows that shout. See, he knows those coal-black, burning eyes; he knows those gray locks, that slightly bent, but commanding form. Great heavens! Delaval—his father! How came they there? Is it a dream? Is he going mad? With a sudden, sharp cry, he springs and falls. A knife has stabbed him through the back. The villain dare not face him. 'Tis Pellam. The conflict goes on over the bleeding and insensible body of Marcus. *Right* and *might* at last prevail.

There was a blank in the existence of Marcus; how long he knew not. When he again opened his dim eyes, he saw around him the burning sands of the desert. He was travelling through them, though, every step he made in the hot, arid path, he tottered and panted, and his breath came like flame from his lips. He could see in the distance the green oases, those Edens of the sandy wilderness; he could hear the sweet, pensive, soothing voice of the fountain; sometimes, through the sultry air, there would flow a stream of balmy freshness; but it was so vanishing, he scarcely felt that it had been near. If he could only reach that fountain, bathe his feverish brow

in its waters, and die! This was the prayer of his soul. He strove to drag his weary feet, they sank deeper and deeper in the hot sand. He fell prostrate on his face, and the scorching simoom swept over him just as he was panting out his life on this burning bed. Oh, joy! oh, rapture! a spring comes welling up on the very spot where he lies. The waters touch his parched and thirsty lips; he looks down, he sees the long, feathery moss waving, softly waving in the deep, pellucid fount. He looks up; the long, shining leaves, the glorious, waxen, odoriferous blossoms of the magnolia are bending over him, swaying, gracefully, lightly, in the gentle wind. That blessed wind—how it cools, how it refreshes his dry and weary spirit! How he tries to breathe forth his depth of gratitude! Yes, it is his own spring, his beloved Long Moss Spring, born anew in that desert by a miracle of divine love. With a feeling of blissful confidence in that love, he closes his eyes, and a delicious slumber steals over his senses.

When Marcus awoke, the desert, the oasis, the fountain had vanished. The mirage had faded away. He was lying in a darkened chamber, in which the stillness of death reigned. He could see through the muslin curtains that shaded his bed the outlines of a manly figure, but he could not turn his head. He was so weak that he could not prevent his eyelids from closing with a soft slumberous weight. "Father," he whispered. It was a very faint whisper, but it was heard by the watching ear, made miraculously acute by intense anxiety. The figure sank on its knees by the bed-side, its head was bowed in its hands, and sobs were distinctly audible.

Long had Mr. Warland been keeping watch by what was believed would be the death-bed of Marcus. He had watched him in the wild ravings of delirium induced by the agony of his wound, in the still more alarming stupor that succeeded, while the physician admitted only the possibility of his recovery. He could not encourage the faintest hope, though he would not utterly extinguish it. But he, Marcus, had looked, he had spoken with intelligence. The wandering spirit had

come back to its home. The eye, dim and heavy as it was, the light of reason was there, and hope and joy were born anew.

We will now explain the apparently miraculous appearance of Mr. Warland and Delaval at the moment when Marcus was sinking beneath the stroke of the assassin. *Laughing Hector* had been true to the trust confided in him. A remarkable pedestrian, he had arrived in an incredibly short time at Bellamy Place, and delivered the letter to its master. Both Mr. Bellamy and Warland felt increasing solicitude about Marcus. They regretted they had yielded to his boldness and impetuosity. It is true they believed that Arnold was located *somewhere*, and that he would find him in the quietude of home, where it would be easy to arrest him; but when they heard the statement of Hector, and realized the probable end of the adventure, should Marcus encounter him in the fastnesses of the woods, surrounded by his own people, opposing coolness, and treachery, and policy to youth, rashness, and inexperience, they determined to follow and assist him. Delaval, who was at Hickory Hill, proved his friendship to Marcus, by leaving Katy, whom he had found fairer and dearer than ever, and taking the place of Mr. Bellamy, as the companion of the father of his friend. The delay occasioned by the fall of Marcus from his horse proved his salvation, for it gave time for his friends to overtake him, at an hour when they were most needed. Marcus had had the wisdom to secure the assistance of the sheriff of the county through which he ascertained Arnold was travelling, though he was not aware that he was about to encounter the envious and vindictive Pellam. The result of the conflict in the tent, as we have said before, was the triumph of justice. One of the overseers was killed—the other yielded. Pellam fled as soon as he saw Marcus fall, and Arnold was compelled to give up the useless struggle by Warland, who, goaded to phrensy by the sight of his prostrate and bleeding son, put forth the strength of a giant. The negroes were taken by virtue of the warrant, and he himself continued his course to Texas, where his wife awaited him.

Marcus was removed to the nearest habitation. Delaval, though his yearning heart longed to plead the sacred rights of friendship, knew that a father's rights were holier still, and, yielding his place by the bedside, he assumed another and very heavy responsibility. The negroes must have a master. They must be conducted home. The remaining overseer, who had not understood the true position of Arnold's affairs, was willing to enter the service of Delaval. The place of the other was supplied by a better man.

If there is any want of clearness in this explanation, it must be imputed to our dislike to go back, and enter into dry and business-like details. We plead guilty to a desire to hurry them over as quickly as possible. As the traveller rides rapidly through a flat and barren region, that he may arrive at the green and smiling country wooing him in the distance; so we will only add, in connection with this part of the history, that the slaves, who, sullen and reluctant, had been dragging forward unwilling steps, turned back with cheerful and rejoicing spirits, glad to exchange a careless and selfish master for the young and spirited Delaval.

For weeks Marcus lay in a languishing condition. The wound had come very near the citadel of life. One hair's-breadth nearer would have been death. Besides his father, he had a kind negro nurse, who reminded him of Aunt Milly, for she always wore a peaked turban and white starched apron. One evening, she told him she was sent for to wait upon a lady, but a young mulatto girl would take her place, who was used to taking care of the sick, and had "mighty gentle, pretty ways." Marcus was in that languid, feeble state, that state of perfect quiescence, he felt no interest in any change which might be going on around him. But he was still conscious of an agreeable transition, when the young mulatto glided round him, instead of the kind but somewhat officious negro woman. He was not yet considered out of danger, and the footsteps that hovered near him had to be soft "as snow on snow." Rosa—for that was the name of the young girl—might have

passed for a snowflake, from the lightness of her step, and her voice was very low and soft. Even the sight of the green blind that covered her eyes was refreshing to his enfeebled vision. It was in consequence of this weakness of the eyes that she was placed as nurse over the sick, an office she seemed to love, and for which nature had peculiarly adapted her. It was only, however, the lighter offices, such as brushing away the flies, giving water and medicine, that she was appointed to perform. There were gratuitous services also she took peculiar pleasure in rendering, such as adorning the room with flowers, and even strewing them on his pillow. She seemed to have a passion for roses, and would sometimes bring in a whole apron full, and twist them in garlands for the looking-glass and mantel-piece. Her chief employment was waving a gorgeous brush of peacock's feathers over his bed, to keep off the intruding flies. Marcus, who had nothing else to do, loved to watch the light movements of his gentle nurse. She reminded him of Cora, though her complexion wanted the golden brightness of that ill-starred bride, and the beautiful gazelle-eyes were wanting, that gave such a charm to Cora's beaming face. She was very modest, seldom spoke, unless addressed; but Marcus was struck with the propriety of her language, in comparison with most of her race. As he grew stronger she became more communicative, and told him that her young mistress had taught her to read, and that she had lived with her more as a companion than a slave.

"I love my young mistress as well as I do myself," said the grateful Rosa. "She could not be kinder to herself than she has always been to me."

"Why do you not stay with her?" asked Marcus.

"She is gone a long journey, and it is bad for weak eyes to ride in the sun. A sick-chamber, where the curtains are all down, is the best place for them."

But Marcus was soon able to sit up in an easy-chair, and look abroad upon the beautiful world he had been so near quitting for ever. The inexpressible languor that had been

weighing upon him, softly but oppressively, like a downy covering, began to disperse. The spring, the elasticity of life, returned. He longed to be once more in action. The wounded bird endures passively the confinement of the cage; but the moment the wings gain strength, they beat against the prison-bars, and strive for the blue sky and the open air.

One night he was seated by the open window, through which the moon was shining, making silver checker-work on the floor. His face was as white as marble, while his eyes looked unusually dark and luminous. Rosa came in with a bouquet of beautifully arranged flowers, and handed them to him without speaking. As she was standing, with her head a little one side, a natural position of hers, she could see beneath her green shade his pale yet lustrous countenance, and she seemed struck with its extraordinary beauty. She sighed, and turned toward the window, where the moon looked directly down on her own deep, olive cheek.

"What can I ever do for you, Rosa?" said Marcus, in a gentle voice, gazing with admiration on the lovely outline of her face, to which the moonbeams were now giving a pale silver edging. "You have spoiled me by your kind, unceasing attentions. I do not know what I shall do without you. If it were not for my friends, I could almost regret getting well, and being obliged to leave you."

"You will soon forget the poor mulatto," answered Rosa, in a tremulous voice, "while she will think of the time spent in your sick chamber as the happiest of her whole life."

There was something in the tone, the manner, that startled Marcus, that gave him a feeling of unutterable pain. There was a pathos, a hopelessness,—he could not deny it,—a *love* in the tones, that, combined as it was with the recollection of her unwearied devotion, her sleepless cares, her flowery offering, her gentle sighs, invested her with a romance in that soft, silvery hour, as painful as it was singular.

"I cannot be so ungrateful as to forget one who has been so kind to me," he replied; "I shall talk about you to

my friends, to my sweet sister. We shall all remember Rosa."

"Who are Florence and L'éclair, that you used to talk about in your sleep? Which is your sister?" asked she, "and why have they not been to see you?"

"They are too far off," he replied. "My sister did wish to come, but as my father was here himself, he thought she had better not. Florence and L'éclair are one and the same person."

"Do you love her?" asked the mulatto, in a very low voice.

"Better than life, better than my own soul," answered Marcus, with a fervour that brought the blood warmly, brightly to his pallid cheek.

"How happy she must be," exclaimed Rosa, drawing back into the shade, as if she feared the lustre that surrounded her would reveal her inmost soul; "how happy those must be who love each other. I never shall see one of my own colour that I can love, and the poor mulatto dare not cast her eyes beyond her tribe."

Marcus began to feel the deepest embarrassment. It was evident his pretty, gentle, child-like young nurse regarded him with emotions he was far from wishing to inspire. The lingering debility of illness rendered him more susceptible to tenderness and compassion, and he felt pity for her infatuation, rather than anger at her presumption. Poor, refined young creature! How could she feel any congeniality with the beings of her tribe? She seemed formed for no office more rude than to gather roses, and wave the sun-eyed plumes over the couch of sickness. He shuddered to think of her ever being associated with her more sable brethren.

"Can I do any thing more for you, young master?" said she, in a tone of touching humility.

"No, I thank you," replied Marcus. "You had better retire."

She hesitated a moment, approached the door, then paused, and returned a few steps.

"I am going away to-morrow," she said; "my young mistress has sent for me. You are now so nearly well, you can do without much waiting on; at any rate, you will be going away yourself directly."

"To-morrow," repeated Marcus. He was unwilling to acknowledge to himself how reluctant he felt to be separated from his interesting nurse. There was a charm about her, whose influence he had felt, when she first entered with downy footsteps his then darkened room. "To-morrow; that is very soon."

He wanted to give her some token of gratitude. He could not offer her money; that would degrade too much her heartfelt services. He had a ring on his finger, a ruby ring, that was the amulet given him by Mrs. Bellamy. He could not part with that. He had a locket, containing Katy's hair, suspended from a gold chain in his bosom. This was a fitting memorial, and this he gave her. The blood rushed visibly to her dark cheek, she trembled with emotion.

"One more favour," she said. "Don't think me bold; one lock of your hair, to put with this beautiful dark one; Rosa never will part with it."

Running to the table with the eagerness of a child, she caught up a pair of scissors, and held them toward him. Marcus laughed, but he could not help blushing, as he shook forward the long locks that waved back from his forehead.

"Cut it yourself," said he, "if you care about it. I can spare it very well from this golden fleece."

Passing her little, soft, dark fingers through the luxuriant clusters, she severed a tress, and holding it up in the moonbeams, laughed with childish delight. "Beautiful! beautiful!" she exclaimed, "prettier than the chain, prettier than the locket. Thank you, thank you for this."

Turning round, and touching it lightly to her lips, she vanished from the room.

"What a child of Nature she is!" thought Marcus. "She

seems as beautiful as Cora, and a hundred times more refined. Poor Rosa!"

The next morning, the black boy, who had acted as her under servant during her administrations to him, brought him a fresh cluster of flowers, saying Rosa had sent it, as a parting gift. "She would not bid him good-bye," the boy said, "because she was afraid she should cry."

Marcus felt as if there were a blank in his being. The fairy-like step, the gentle hand that had given such a charm to his sick room were now gone. He was certain he would have died if it had not been for her unwearied ministrations. Kind and devoted as his father had been, he was a *man*. He would sit up with him night after night, sleepless and tireless. He would make any sacrifice of personal ease to paternal love; but he was a *man*, and never thought of those little nameless attentions, so inexpressibly soothing to those reduced to child-like weakness. 'Tis woman, whose soft hand bathes the feverish brow and smooths the ruffled pillow, fans the burning cheek and decorates the apartment, so as to gladden the weary eye. It was thus Rosa had done, and notwithstanding the dark hue that divided her from him as a natural barrier, he never could recall, without thrilling interest, her fidelity, devotion, and artless love.

In a short time he was able to commence his journey, travelling slowly at first, with intervals of rest, but gathering vigour and spirit every mile that brought him nearer to Bellamy Place.

No hero returned from a glorious campaign was ever welcomed with more enthusiasm than Marcus. Exalted by courage and endeared by danger, the feelings he inspired partook more of idolatry than common affection. He did not feel that he had in any way cancelled the debt of gratitude; but he rejoiced he had been enabled to be of use to his benefactor. Nor was it alone at Hickory Hill he received the honours due to a hero. The fame of his heroic actions spread far and wide. It was blazoned in the newspapers, discussed in the streets,

talked about in the private circle. His youth, talents, and dauntless resolution, his extraordinary personal endowments, were the exhaustless topics of the day. Never did a young man commence a public career under more splendid auspices. He did not select a large city as the theatre of his professional labours. He remembered the advice of Judge Cleveland on that subject. "Young men," said that wise and excellent man, "are apt to seek distinction in the very places where their separate existence is unrecognised. In a large and populous city, where the professions are crowded, they have to wait for those occasions, which so rarely occur, to elicit distinguished talent or brilliant genius. Let them rather choose a small town, with wealthy surroundings; let them make the *place* celebrated by their own renown, and then they may 'take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea,' if they will; the light of their reputation will follow them."

It was just such a spot as this, in his native State, that Marcus selected to make himself a name and fame, that should go abroad into the world; to cultivate the *vineyard*, to build the *bower*, that, covered with the rosy bloom of love, might woo to its sweet retreat the bright and beloved L'éclair.

Delaval, the friend of his youth, was the betrothed of his sister, so that he had a prospect of being united to him by a two-fold cord. The young master of Wood Lawn had not commenced his career as a lawyer. He had taken possession of his estate; and though Mr. Alston still resided with him, he had no longer the authority to dictate, as his aristocracy prompted. The uncle considered it his especial duty to choose a wife for Delaval—an *irreproachable connection;* but he found the nephew, as well as niece, had a strong will, and preferred choosing for himself.

"In one year from this time," said Delaval, "the sweetest violet that ever sought the shade shall beautify with its modest charms my Wood Lawn home."

"In one year," cried Marcus, "I can transplant my wild

Passion-flower, where it shall bloom gloriously in the sunshine of my heart."

One year! Marcus believed in perennial sunshine. He felt it warming, shining within. He saw it sparkling, shining without. He thought of no cloud. Why should he, when the firmament was one clear, blue, boundless arch; when no cloud, as big as a man's hand, floated on the ether? But who would believe that the dew that sparkles on the grass and the flowers contained the elements of the storm, that may destroy their verdure and their bloom?

CHAPTER XIII.

"Oh! agony—keen agony!
For trusting heart to find
That vows believed were vows conceived
As light as summer wind.
Oh! agony! sharp agony!
To find how loth to part
With the fickleness and faithlessness
That break a trusting heart!"—MOTHERWELL.

FLORENCE sat at her favourite window, reading. She did not seem deeply engaged in the contents of her book, for she would look up occasionally, with a soft, dreamy, abstracted air, and suffer it to fall in her lap. Then leaning her head on her hand, she would twist her fingers in a gold chain that encircled her neck, and play with the locket that nestled in her bosom. That she had a subject of reflection more pleasing than her book, was evident from the sweet, subdued expression of her love-lighted face. She had told Marcus, in that very room, on that very seat, that she dreaded the thought of love; that she knew, if she once yielded to its influence, she would become a vassal to its will. Even when she was boasting of her freedom, she was a captive to its power; but she was a Zenobia bound in golden chains, a queen even in her captivity, disdaining to acknowledge her subjection or pay homage to her victor. Now the pride that had resisted was the strong auxiliary of her love. She gloried in having felt, even at the

first glance, the superiority, the genius, to which the world was beginning to bow. She exulted in the thought, that if she had obeyed the great law of woman's being,—that centripetal attraction which draws her irresistibly toward some central and controlling force—she was a primary orb, revolving round no lesser luminary, but tracing her dazzling path near one who was destined to be the effulgent sun of the social system to which she belonged.

But there was no pride mingled in the reflections which she was now indulging. All the softness, the tenderness of woman's nature was floating in her eyes of eastern splendour, and stealing over the rubies of her lips. She was thinking of Marcus, not as the eloquent pleader, the intellectual gladiator, the bold vindicator of outraged justice, such as he had taken his stand before the world; but as she had last seen him, pallid and gentle, dependent on her cares, passive and grateful as a child. She drew forth the locket, the pledge of his gratitude to his humble attendant, and gazed on the beautiful, amber lock, now braided with Katy's dark-brown hair.

"Ah! little does he think," said she, smiling at the little romance of which she was the unknown heroine, "whose hand administered to his helplessness. Little does he think, when he so gently encircled the bending neck of the mulatto girl with this golden chain, he was adding new and stronger links to the heart-fetters that bind us to each other. Ah! how well I remember that moment—that holy, moonlight hour! Down in the unfathomable depths of my spirit I felt his regal power. I was clothed in the humility of the disguise I wore. I could have knelt at his feet, borne down by the mighty burden of my love. How I longed to throw myself into his arms, to weep upon his bosom, to breathe out the fulness of my gratitude that God had given him back to life! But I resisted the temptation, and I rejoice that my secret is safe. He never shall know, that in the delirium of my despair, the madness of my love at the tidings of his danger, I was guilty of an act of imprudence, for which even George has scarcely forgiven

me, good Mrs. Lewis preached me a thousand sermons, and which, if my proud uncle knew, would end his perpendicularity and his life. Blessings on the journey that took him from home at that very time. What if Marcus should condemn me for it? Ah! I should wish myself the Lightning indeed, that I might blast him for his ingratitude."

"What is that, Letty?" she asked, as a negro girl came in with a packet in her hand.

"Something one of Master Patterson's men left as he go by," answered Letty, the favourite attendant of Florence—one of the ugliest and shrewdest creatures that can possibly be imagined. It is impossible to describe her face, but it gave one the impression of being wrong side outward, and her extraordinary grimaces seemed efforts to turn it right. Delaval said Florence kept this girl about her as a foil for her beauty, but it was from a better motive. When Florence was a very little girl, Letty, not a great deal older than herself, had saved her from drowning, and in several instances had shown such a remarkable attachment that Florence rewarded it by giving her the position she most desired, a place in the household, and near her own person.

Mr. Patterson was a gentleman who resided not very far from Wood Lawn. His son was in college at the same time with Marcus and Delaval, and when he renewed his acquaintance with the latter at his own home, he, like many others, paid his addresses to the young heiress, receiving a courteous but decided refusal. Though discarded as a lover, he still claimed the privileges of a friend, and Florence often received books and papers and tokens of remembrance from him.

She opened the packet. It contained several newspapers and a pamphlet. She thought the papers might have some connection with Marcus, and she eagerly ran over the columns. She was right. There were extracts from a speech he had made at a very interesting trial, which had attracted great attention, and won him signal honour. It was thrillingly eloquent, but as the editor remarked, "it wanted the voice of

deep, melodious persuasion, the magnetic eye, the graceful gesture, the personal fascination that distinguished the youthful orator." Florence read, while the generous pride one feels in the triumphs of a beloved friend swelled her heart.

"And this gifted being is mine," thought she. "The voice of millions will one day justify my choice; and yet, he would be as dear to me if, unknown, unprized by the world, he existed alone for love and me."

"But what is this?" she said, opening the pamphlet. "Some political document, fresh from Congress. For George, I suppose. When *somebody* makes the dry bones shake there with his prophet voice, I will condescend to read all their pamphlets."

"You dropped something, Miss Florence," said Letty, picking up a letter from the carpet. "I reckon it a love-letter."

Florence took it, and read the superscription,—"Mr. Alfred Patterson." "He must have sent this for me to read," said she, unfolding it. "But I cannot imagine what interest I can have in his letters. Ah! I see—I understand."

With a blush of pleasure she began its perusal. The blush faded. Calmness, and even indifference succeeded. Then suddenly her brow contracted; her face reddened, crimsoned; her eyes flashed like burning gas. She started up, dashed the letter on the carpet, and pressed her foot crushingly upon it.

"What the matter?—what the matter, Miss Florence?" cried Letty, in alarm. "Something sting you? Wasp, yellow-jacket? Let me find him."

"Stung? Yes! stung—stung through the heart. Don't speak to me—don't," cried she, wildly, stamping her foot passionately on the paper.

"Hornet in this letter," said Letty, grinning, and stooping to pick it up. "I kill him, you see if I don't."

"How dare you laugh?" exclaimed Florence, snatching the paper from her hands, and walking the room with the step and look of a Delphi priestess, so intense was her passion, so unut-

terable its expresssion. "Open the window," she cried. "I cannot breathe—I suffocate."

Terrified at the frantic emotions, Letty leaped toward the window, at the risk of plunging her ugly head through the panes, and opening it, pushed back the curtains, then seizing a large feather fan, began to fan the scarlet cheeks of her young mistress with great vehemence.

Florence made an impatient gesture with her hand. "Leave me," she said, in a husky voice. "I want to be alone—I must be alone."

"I so sorry. I mighty sorry, Miss Florence," said the sympathizing negro. "What can have happened to make you feel so bad? I do hope nothing the matter with Master Marcus."

Florence, who was leaning against the window, with both hands pressed against her temples, turned round with such a look of indignation Letty was frightened, and drew back two or three steps toward the door.

"If you ever mention that name to me again, Letty," said Florence, her lips curling with ineffable disdain, "you never enter my presence again. Remember. I command everlasting silence."

"Oh! mercy!" cried Letty, rubbing her head with both hands, and making a perfect corkscrew of her face. "Oh! mercy! what can be the matter? Little time ago you go way off, thinking nothing in the world of yourself so you save his life; no care if you die, so he live. And Letty go with you, and know all 'bout it. Now you tell me never speak his name I dumb 'fore I learn that."

Florence flew towards her with uplifted hand. She did not strike her, but she brought that beautiful, soft hand down over the great thick lips it could scarcely cover, and taking hold of her arm with the other hand, gave her an involuntary momentum in the direction of the door she was constrained to follow. The moment she was gone, Florence untwisted the golden chain from her neck.

"I thought it would choke me," she cried. "And this

locket—how it burned against my heart!" Tossing it into the corner of the room, the proud heiress threw herself on the carpet, as if crushed by some mighty wo, her face buried on her arms, her hair sweeping round her, forming a night-shade for her grief and shame. Her frame shook and quivered with the imprisoned fires of passion. Never, perhaps, had a more sudden, terrible storm swept over a human heart. It was like the hurricane of the tropic regions, blasting the rich bloom their burning sun had called forth.

It was thus her brother found her. A little while before he had passed the window where she was seated, and she had looked up with such a sweet, happy smile. And now she was lying on the floor, like one stricken down, crushed; she whose bright, glad nature seemed impassible to suffering. Shocked, alarmed, he bent over her, and tried to raise her, but she resisted the effort. He called her name, but she made no answer.

"Good heavens!" he cried, "what can be the matter. 'Tis terrible. 'Tis convulsions—'tis catalepsy."

He was about to rush out and call for assistance, when he caught a glimpse of the paper she still clenched in her hand. Fearing he might tear it, he unclosed her fingers, expecting to meet with strong resistance, but, to his astonishment, she appeared unconscious of his touch, though not insensible. He read the letter in the attitude in which he had taken it, kneeling on one knee, while she lay prostrate and passive beside him. He read it through, and through again, before he moved one muscle. His very breathing seemed suspended. Then he started on his feet with an exclamation so startling, it caused a responsive movement in the seemingly paralyzed limbs of Florence. She raised her head, and leaning on one elbow, looked him in the face. But such a look! it made him shudder. The despair of an Ariadne and the vengeance of a Medea were there.

"Florence," said he, holding out the letter, and grinding his teeth as he spoke, "how came you by this? Who sent it?"

"Who sent it?" repeated she, sitting up, and pushing back her thick, disordered ringlets, while she passed her hand hurriedly over her brow. "Oh, indeed; who did send it?"

"By heavens, he's driven her mad!" exclaimed Delaval, "and me, too. I'll kill him. Yes, I'll kill him, or he me. The whole earth shall not hold us both. By all the powers of heaven and hell, she shall be avenged!"

With a piercing shriek, Florence sprang from the floor, and threw her arms round her brother.

"No, no, no," she cried, "you shall not kill him; you shall not meet him. I will not have any blood shed. No, no. What right have you to do it? This was all a mistake. It came to me by mistake; he never meant I should see it. Oh, that *you* had never seen it! Oh, George, how dare you snatch it from my hand? I would not have had you see it for a thousand worlds."

"Sister," said her brother, sternly, "if you are willing to brook an insult like this, I tell you, it is well there is some one who knows how to maintain the honour of the family. Is it possible, that it is *you*, Florence Delaval, *my* sister, can look me in the face, and tell me that I shall not avenge your wrongs!"

She did look him in the face, with her dark, powerful, deprecating eyes. "Brother, there are wrongs that cannot be avenged, and this is one. I am calmer now; you must listen. I am not mad; I know what I am saying. This is a private letter, fallen by accident into my hands. His private sentiments—that every man has a right to express. Yes," she added, a bitter smile wreathing her pale and quivering lips, "he has a right thus to think and thus to write, and no power on earth can wrest it from him; and I have the right to despise, to hate, to loathe myself in dust and ashes and sackcloth, for having loved this ingrate so wildly, blindly, madly loved him."

"Florence, you love him yet, I believe you do," said Delaval, fiercely. "If I thought you did not despise, hate, loathe

him, as much as you once loved, I could see you die by my own hands, rather than live so degraded."

"Oh, brother, that you would indeed kill me," she cried, sliding down from his arms, and wrapping hers around his knees. "I am so wretched, so miserable; I don't want to live. I feel so blasted, so crushed, so deadly sick at heart."

"And yet you would have me sit down, like a tame fool, and say nothing," he cried. "I swear, by all the gods of Olympus, that he, that false villain, shall meet me, pistol to pistol, or knife to knife, and that one or the other shall be carried dead from the field."

"And as sure as you fulfil that dreadful oath," exclaimed she, clasping her hands passionately together, and raising them above her head, "you destroy me for ever; body and soul, you destroy me. I will not live. You will plunge me in the grave of the suicide; you will drive me to an act for which there is no repentance, no hope, no redemption. George, if you do not take back that fearful oath, if you do not promise me, solemnly promise, now, this moment, your sister's blood will be on your head, your sister's soul required at your hands."

He tried to raise her, but she would not be raised. He tried to unclasp her clinging arms, but she only clung the tighter, repeating, "Promise, George; I never will release you, till you promise to forbear."

"I promise, then," cried he, sullenly, "and eternal disgrace rest upon us both."

She released her arms, and fell forward, weeping. A sudden, violent gush of tears relieved the tension of her brain. She was now passive as an infant. He found no difficulty in lifting her, and seating her on the window-seat by his side, his arms still surrounding her. While she lay, weeping, sobbing on his bosom, dark and stormy thoughts swept through it. All his own dreams of happiness were fled with hers. The blow that severed her from Marcus must sunder the bond that bound him to Katy. This would be the inevitable result Then his friendship, his ardent, disinterested, trusting friend-

ship; what a deep, immedicable wound it had received! Never more could he trust in human virtue or truth. Never more "garner up his heart" in the heart of another. His hot southern blood boiled at the thought of passive endurance of the most galling insult. He writhed at the remembrance of his exacted promise. It seemed as if he were a base, dishonoured coward, a vile, mealy-mouthed hypocrite. Pellam was right. This son of a ferryman and overseer was unworthy to mate with them, or any honourably descended individuals. Then a sudden doubt startled him. Could he indeed have written that letter? He seized hold of this doubt; he grasped it, as the drowning man the twig that floats on the stream.

Suddenly, as if by a simultaneous emotion, the expression of Florence's countenance changed.

"Brother!" she exclaimed. "Let me think one moment. Marcus Warland! Can he be the fiend who has thus cruelly, pitilessly cut me right through the heart? This cannot be his handwriting. Brother, he never wrote it. I know he never did. How could I believe him guilty of such a coward blow? God forgive my injustice. Oh! I have greatly wronged him; I know, I feel I have."

Her countenance lighted up gloriously as she spoke.

"Florence, I do believe you are right. Warland *is* incapable of this baseness. When I think of the years we have passed together, during which his character grew brighter and purer, I feel, with you, the impossibility of his having committed an act like this. We have the power to vindicate him. Where are his letters? Let us compare the handwriting, word with word, letter with letter. If it be forgery, I can detect it at once."

With an eager hand, Florence opened her precious rosewood cabinet, and drew forth the packet, bound with a cerulean ribbon. She shivered as she handed it to him, and her touch was like contact with ice.

"Wait one moment, brother," she cried; "this is an awful moment. Leave me still in doubt. Doubt! how I

despise myself for the word. My faith in him shall not waver."

Delaval, impatiently snatching a letter from the parcel, unfolded it by the side of the crumpled paper he held in his hand, and carefully compared them, *word with word, letter with letter.* Florence leaned over his shoulder, bending her head lower and lower, her lately illumined countenance growing darker and darker, as the irresistible conviction forced itself upon her, that they were written by the same hand. Delaval raised his eyes one moment to hers, and she read the same conviction in that stern, yet burning glance.

"No, this is no forgery," he cried. "The circumstances to which this letter refers are known only to him, Patterson, and myself. Even if the characters did not prove it with such damning fidelity, the contents would be sufficient. I knew that he was to address him on this very subject. Here are the very words I myself uttered the last time I conversed with him. I never breathed them to another human being. I requested him to repeat the same to Patterson. Yes; these are my own words, and this *is* his own handwriting. And, look, Florence, the selfsame paper, too, with his ciphers stamped upon it. He got it at the North. We visited the paper-mill together where it was made, and both of us ordered some with our initials pressed on the corner of the sheet. Florence, he *is* a villain. Every shadow of a doubt is swept away. He is a most consummate villain."

"No," she replied, with bloodless lips, "I recall my own rash words. He has revealed his naked heart to another, not to me. I, I have done the whole. I have outraged his delicacy, alienated his affection, and with my own hand murdered his love. And yet," she added, with a kindling countenance, "how dare he attempt to transfer me to another? How dare he insult me so coldly, so deliberately? This I never, never can forgive."

While Florence was speaking, the truth of what she had previously said came forcibly into the mind of Delaval. This

was a private letter, not intended for their perusal; it was the expression of one man's feelings to another; the liberty of mind, the republicanism of thought. By a public act of vengeance, he would only blazon the affair to the world, and make his sister's name a byword, to be banded from lip to lip with mockery and reproach. Blood would not efface the impression. It would only give it a more hideous glare.

"Yes," muttered he to himself, "she is right. There are some wrongs that cannot be avenged, and this is one. It is no wonder he looks down upon us, when we have worshipped him as if he were some eastern divinity. Heavens, Florence!" he exclaimed, walking backward and forward, like a caged lion, "I would give Wood Lawn, and all the lawns in creation, if I owned them, that I had never abetted you in your wild frolic of writing those foolish letters, and still more do I mourn your infatuation in assuming that romantic and unheard-of disguise. I ought to be shot this moment, for not proving a better guardian to your reckless youth. We have made him arrogant and presumptuous; we have forgotten our own self-respect."

"Do not say *we*, George," said Florence, in a tone of deep and touching humility. "Mine alone is the folly, and mine alone be the punishment. Most bitterly have I repented of my girlish forwardness; but I was a mere child then, a creature of impulse and passion. Alas! I am still the same; the same impulsive, impassioned being, untaught by experience, and undisciplined by reason."

"Experience!" cried Delaval, with bitterness. "Moralists boast of the great world,—master experience,—but I never could discover his merits. He warns us of the past, but we know that already. His lamp throws all its rays backward. I want a guide for the future; and such a future? Shade of Cicero!"

Delaval threw himself on the window-seat, and endeavoured to compose his thoughts and deliberate on the course he must adopt The only way was for Florence to return the letters of Marcus, with every memorial of his false love, with a haughty

and positive rejection, without any allusion to the disgraceful letter which had providentially revealed his true character. But Katy; sweet, modest, gentle, loving Katy! How could he tear her from his heart,—that warm, noble, generous heart, where she was so sacredly enshrined? The sister of that false, rejected brother would never consent to be his wife. His letters would be returned, just as that perfumed blue-bound packet was about to be; the rings with which he had encircled her fair fingers, the bracelets he had clasped round her snowy arms,—they would all come back, mocking him with the memory of his past happiness, the thought of his brightest hopes. Wood Lawn would henceforth be a desert to him, the whole world a wilderness. He had a strong mind to shoot himself, he had not promised Florence not to do that. He could do it without perjury, but not without guilt,—guilt "unhouselled, unanointed, unannealed;" so God's voice within, *still, small,* but deep, whispered, and he groaned at the thought of the cold, dreary, unloving life he was doomed to lead.

"You are unhappy, brother; I have made you so," said Florence, taking his hand in both hers, and laying her cheek gently upon it. "You must not give up Katy for me. *She* is not to blame; *I* only am. Rash, imprudent girl that I am. I have brought this on myself. I feel it now, when it is too late."

Delaval drew her closer to him. She had been rash and imprudent. He had told her that before; but he could not reproach her now. He felt too deep a tenderness, too entire a love, too intense a compassion. They sat thus in silence—she weary and exhausted by her passion and her tears, thankful, in her abandonment and desolation, that one friend was left to sympathize with and care for her, one breast on which she could pillow her aching head and solace her wounded heart.

"You had better go to your room, Florence," said he, gathering up her dishevelled hair and smoothing it back from her shoulders. "Some one might come in. Go and lie down. Your head must ache. I need not caution you not to reveal the cause of your agitation. You have too much pride to betray it."

"Thank you for the warning; I will profit by it," said she, with a sudden flash of spirit, "and thank you for your tenderness, your sympathy, and your promise too—dear, dear George—oh! how I love you for it! I have no one else in the world to love but you, now—for I cared but for one besides," she added, in a low voice, as she left the apartment.

Alone in her own room, she threw herself on the bed, and drawing the fringed curtains closely round her, wrapped herself in darkness as with a mantle. She knew not when night came on, for Delaval had told Letty not to have her disturbed, as she was ill, and wanted no supper. Mrs. Lewis was absent on a visit to a friend—a fortunate circumstance for Florence and the mystery of her grief.

"Is that you, Letty?" asked she, hearing footsteps entering, and perceiving the glimmer of a light through the curtains.

"Yes, Miss Florence, it's me. Shall I bring your supper?"

"No; come here, Letty." The negro put down the light, and came softly toward the bed, peeping through the curtains.

"Letty," said Florence, holding out her hand, "I spoke crossly to you. I did not know what I was saying; you must forget it."

"Oh, Miss Florence, don't say that. I no business to stick my ugly nose in your matters, any way—that I haint. I wish I pull out my tongue, I do—saucy old thing."

"Undress me, Letty, and let me sleep. You don't know how sick I feel."

Tenderly as if she were fondling an infant, Letty prepared her young mistress for the night's repose, which she feared would not visit her pillow. She combed and brushed her rich, tangled, tear-moistened locks, letting them drip over her black fingers, in blacker, shining curls. There was nothing in the world in which she delighted so much as this, and though her features were so large and coarse, she had remarkably small and delicately-shaped fingers, and her touch was as light as the fabulous Rosa's.

"Thank you," said Florence, suffering her head to fall lan-

guidly back on the pillow. "That is soothing. You are a good creature, Letty. I will try never to speak cross to you again. Don't say any thing."

Letty placed the lamp in the chimney, where it could not shine on the face of her young mistress, and seating herself at a distance, remained perfectly still. Florence too was still. It was the torrent's smoothness, after it has dashed over the rocks—the lull of the tempest, when its fury has spent.

She slept—but it was not rest. Every now and then she would start up, with a faint scream, look wildly round her, close her eyes and fall back again. Once she cried out, "The letter—oh! Marcus—that letter!"

Letty sat in her shaded corner, and "pondered these things in her heart."

Florence rose at the usual hour, and suffered Letty to linger with unusual care over her toilette. Though her head throbbed almost to bursting, she allowed her tire-woman to twist the wild undulation of her tresses around her fingers, as she was wont to do. When she looked in the glass and saw her pallid cheek and altered countenance, she blushed, indignant at her own weakness, and the life came back to her cheek and eye. Delaval met her at the door of the breakfast-room with a brotherly kiss. He was rejoiced to see her looking so much like herself, and his own stern, joyless countenance brightened as he gazed upon her. But after the first greeting was over, and she believed herself unnoticed, he remarked the gradual subsiding of her spirit. The colour all went away from her cheek, and she sat with weeping lashes, that threw a deeper pallor on her pensive face.

"Come and take a ride on horseback with me, sister," said he, when the breakfast was through, which she scarcely touched. "I want to show you what wonders I have done on the plantation since I have taken the reins in my own hand. That fine jaunt I had with Arnold's negroes was an excellent apprenticeship for me. They thought I was a jewel of a master."

Florence appreciated her brother's motive, and gladly ac-

companied him. She wanted to get away from herself. She would have gone to the world's end, if she could have reached it. It was astonishing how her life came back to her, when she went out into the open air on a light-footed pony. The haughty spirit that sustained her of yore returned to its former dwelling-place in her bosom. She would not weep, and sigh, and pine, for an ingrate, unworthy of woman's generous, uncalculating, self-forgetting love. She would rend him from her heart, though half of the quivering member were torn away, with the image it enshrined. She would drink of the cold waters of Lethe, and find a blessed nepenthe for a wounded spirit. Thus she resolved, and thus, in the presence of others, she appeared to feel and act; but when alone, she lived over again the fleet, blissful dream of the past, and nature vindicated its rights. Then, her mighty, unconquerable love soared above the remembrance of ingratitude, scorn, and contempt. It was a love like that which mourns for the dead; for he whom she loved no longer existed. A bright ideal, it had vanished, and left a vacuum the whole world could not fill.

> It was—as if the desert bird,
> Whose beak unlocks her bosom's stream,
> To still her famish'd nursling's scream,
> Nor mourns a life to them transferr'd—
> Should rend her rash, devoted breast,
> And find them flown her empty nest."

She had one task to perform which she dreaded, but would not defer. To gather all the mementoes of her ill-directed attachment; to return his letters and pledges of love; to destroy the faded flowers she had been treasuring as holy relics. She took from her finger a ruby ring, the token of his plighted faith, and drew through it the golden chain which he had passed round the neck of Rosa. The ruby was her favourite gem. Its glowing hue heightened the dark splendour of her beauty, and was an appropriate emblem of love. Now, as she looked for the last time on a pledge she had thought would remain on her finger, even under the dark coffin-lid, it seemed to emit a bleeding radiance, and she could almost fancy it owed its crimson tint to drops of blood. The letters she would not

read, lest a re-perusal of pages so fraught with fascination should soften her purpose, and unfit her for the stern duty before her. Her task was finished; the few decisive words written; the packet sealed, directed, and ready to be sent. Then she sat down, and shuddered at the blank before her. A Peruvian worshipper, who beheld the god whom he adored abdicate his mid-day throne, and leave to darkness the regency of the universe, could hardly feel more appalled and chilled by the desolation of his temple; more sad for its departed glory.

The more she reflected, the more she blamed herself, and exculpated him. She had shocked, disgusted him, by the greatness of her love. From the time when, a wild, impulsive girl, she had met him by the wayside fountain, and felt that strong, irresistible attraction which modern philosophy vainly attempts to explain, and addressed to him those anonymous letters, to the moment the paper destined to reveal herself to herself in a true light fell at her feet, that love had been growing stronger, deeper, fuller. It was too strong, too deep for the narrow channel in which custom had forced it. It had dashed over some conventional restraints, some ancient landmarks, and flowed on in the strength and joy of its waves.

Why, when she heard that he was wounded and dying, a stranger in a strange place, did she not do as others of a colder temperament would have done, content herself by shedding a few unavailing tears, and wishing she were privileged to minister to his sufferings? Why, disguising the heiress under the form of an humble mulatto, protected only by the faithful Letty, had she pressed on through unknown difficulties to be with him in sickness and danger, perhaps in death? Her self-devotion, her matchless love, how had it been repaid? With scorn and loathing, that neither gratitude nor former love could triumph over. She had believed her disguise impenetrable—her secret unrevealed. But Marcus had penetrated the one, and revealed the other.

She must endure the shame, and bear the cross she had laid upon herself. She must suffer the agonies of martyrdom with-

out its crown. She would walk the lonely path she had herself strewed with thorns; and though her feet might bleed, and her spirit faint from pain and weariness, she would not murmur, but trust, that chastened by suffering, she might at last reach some quiet spot—

> "Where storms of passion never blow,
> Temptations never come."

Such were the thoughts of the young, rich, and beautiful Florence, while she imagined no human eye beheld her in the solitude of her lamp-lighted chamber.

But Letty, though stretched on her pallet, which was spread every night in the apartment of her young mistress, watched every change of her varying and expressive countenance with unsleeping interest.

Florence caught a glimpse of one of her big, revolving eyes, above the bed-cover, and extinguished the lamp. Still the negro gazed on her starlit profile, and continued her musings. She was trying to solve an enigma, and had any one asked her by what mental process she arrived at certain conclusions, she would have answered, like a mathematical prodigy of her own colour, "I just studies it out."

CHAPTER XIV.

> "'Tis a noble youth," the people spake,
> "Thou need'st be afraid,
> For all oppress'd and injured men
> Fly unto him for aid.
> "Now, where is one shall do us right?"
> A widow pale she cried—
> "Oh! where is one to take my part,
> Against the men of pride?"—MARY HOWITT.

If almost unexampled success could produce elation and vainglory, Marcus Warland was in danger of inordinate self-esteem. Circumstances had favoured in a remarkable manner his opening career. Theft, forgery, and murder seemed to have made the scene of his labours their head-quarters, so that the young champion of the majesty of the law might test the

keenness and strength of the weapons with which he armed himself for its defence. He had that open-sesame to the caverns of mind; that golden key to the chambers of the heart; eloquence, native eloquence, the gift of God, not man.

"His was the glorious burst of winged words," that bear on their rush the listening throng. His was the burning glance, that, like a living coal from the altar, kindled the spirits of his listeners, and his the persuasive lip that distilled the honey of Hybla's scented fields. He knew his power, and was conscious that the time was fast approaching when he could offer to Florence a name of which even her proud uncle would be proud.

He was at this time engaged in a most interesting trial. A youth of about seventeen was accused of the murder of a young female, on circumstantial evidence. He had a widowed mother, and he was her only son. At the time of the arrest, when he was literally dragged to prison, for he resisted with ndescribable terror the power that had grasped him, his agonized glance, sweeping over the crowd that gathered in the street, was fixed by the magnetic eye of Marcus, and stretching out his arms toward him, he implored him for the love of God to have mercy on him, and save him from the scaffold. Notwithstanding the darkness of the case, and the strength of evidence against him, and the practice of criminals to endeavour to screen their guilt under vehement assertions of innocence, Marcus believed in the possibility of his being stainless of this foul crime. His compassion was excited by the grief of the widowed mother, and the strong affection existing between her and her imprisoned son. "We are poor and lonely," cried the weeping woman. "There will be no one to plead in his behalf. My Willie will be sacrificed, for justice, alas! must be bought."

"I will undertake his defence," said Marcus, "and if he be innocent, may Heaven assist me to prove it. If guilty, may God have mercy on his soul."

Having once pledged his word, he laboured as assiduously to make himself master of the circumstances, as if millions

were to be his reward. He spared neither time, nor expense, nor feeling. He mingled with the dross of the populace, that he might extract the gold of truth.

It was while seated, one afternoon, in his office, trying to clench some fact which would bear strongly on the case, a large packet was brought to him.

"From whom?"

It was not known. The messenger was gone, without waiting for a reply. He recognised the handwriting of Delaval on the covering, and hastily broke the numerous seals by which it was secured. There was an inner covering, but between that and the outer envelope was a note, superscribed by the hand of Florence, which he eagerly unfolded. It contained but these few lines:

"MARCUS WARLAND—Blushing for the infatuation from which I am now, henceforth and for ever, free, I return your written and given pledges, and demand the immediate restoration of my own. FLORENCE DELAVAL."

He read this brief, but explicit, note several times before he opened the second envelope. He felt every word burning in the central fires of his heart. His hands were cold, his face colourless, but without a single exclamation he tore away the covering from his letters, and the golden chain, the locket with the golden hair, and the ruby ring, fell at his feet. He took up the chain, and recognised his parting gift to the gentle Rosa. He was bewildered, amazed. How came it in the possession of Florence? The identity of Florence with the young mulatto had never entered his mind before, and it is not strange that it did not occur to him at this moment. But there was a thought, a flashing one, that seemed to throw light on the inexplicable insult he had just received. Florence, by some means, had come in contact with Rosa, and learned the history of this token of gratitude, so poor, so small, for a devotion so entire, a debt so large. She had taken it from her, that she might send it to him, as an explanation of her

renunciation of him. Yes! it was evident that the proud, high-souled Florence was jealous of the poor, too sensitive mulatto, who had humbly craved a lock of his hair, that hair which she had so often smoothed with her soft hand, when it lay moistened with the dew of suffering. The heiress of Wood Lawn considered it a violation of her rights, and she had discarded the lover whose gratitude to a menial resembled the demonstration of love. The mystery was thus explained: but how had the mighty fallen; how had the fine gold become dim! Florence suspected him of the basest treachery; the most degrading inconsistency;—suspected *him*, Marcus Warland—him whom she knew so well. The pallor of his face became suffused with deepening crimson; his icy fingers tingled with a burning sensation. Too nobly self-reliant himself to admit of the existence of jealousy, he could not tolerate its dominion over another—and that other one whom he believed lifted high above the little foibles of her sex. He sat down, and leaning his head on his hands, tried to think calmly of the rashness and injustice of which Florence had been guilty, and his meditations terminated in a feeling of tenderness and compassion for her strange delusion. His idol had fallen from the pedestal of perfection on which he had elevated her, but she was his idol still. He had worshipped her as an angel, but she was after all only a woman—full of woman's impassioned emotions, and liable to all a woman's weaknesses. He blamed, he pitied, but he loved her still. A few words of explanation from his pen would dissipate the error, and restore her lost confidence. With a lofty consciousness of his own unwavering constancy, and a generous forgiveness of the rash impulse, for which he doubted not she was even now upbraiding herself, he took his pen and wrote as they only write who, as a beautiful writer has observed, "dip their pen in their own hearts." He gave a brief history of his obligations to Rosa, and the circumstances under which he gave her the token she had so mysteriously obtained. He dwelt on the beautiful and holy confidence of their past intercourse; the purity and depth of

their love; and besought her to beware of the influence of that serpent passion, which poisoneth like an asp, and stingeth like an adder. After a simple statement of facts, and an eloquent appeal to her truth and sensibility, he asked her if she adhered to her renunciation and repeated her demands. The letter was written, sealed, put in the mail, and Marcus tried to forget it, and give his sole attention to the human life that hung on the result of his investigations. He locked the packet and the locket in his cabinet, that he might not be reminded of the weakness of L'éclair. He saw the ruby ring sparkling on the floor, and stooping down and picking it up, he placed that also with the offending chain. As he did so, his eye fell on the ruby gem which Mrs. Bellamy had put on his finger when he was about to be exposed to the temptations of a college life. He went back still further, and thought of the moment when she had kissed his brow in the little cabin on the banks of the Chattahoochee. From that moment to the present hour, her love, which had known no variableness nor change, had been around and about him as a shield and a charm.

"No voluntary act of mine," thought the young man, raising the sacred talisman to his lips, "has ever paled the lustre of this glowing gem, or caused the blush of shame on the cheek of my beloved benefactress. Oh! misguided L'éclair! I could mourn in dust and ashes over thy broken trust and my own vanished dream of perfection."

During the days that must intervene before he could receive an answer to his letter, he laboured for his poor young client with increasing zeal. He rode fifty miles for a witness, whose testimony would have weight at the trial. He visited the accused in his grated cell, determined, as he had embraced his cause, to believe him innocent till he was proved guilty beyond the shadow of a doubt. He went to the broken-hearted widow, and breathed into her fainting spirit comfort and resignation. Poor and insignificant seemed his own sorrow compared to the mighty interests they had at stake.

The very morning of the trial, the letter arrived. With an

agitated hand he broke the seal. His own unopened letter dropped from the envelope—his own heart thrown back into his face! Never had the countenance of Marcus worn such an expression before. Never but *once* had such a whirlwind of passion raged in his bosom; and that was when the black-bearded speculator raised his whip over his head, while he was defending Milly from his lawless clutches. Tearing the letter into a thousand pieces, he threw the fragments from the window to the four winds of heaven, and exclaimed, "Thus do I rend from my bosom every trace of my boyhood's folly and youth's delusion! Thus do I shatter the image too wildly worshipped! Truth, justice, humanity, I am henceforth yours. To you I devote the strength of my manhood, my powers of mind, body and soul. On your sacred altars I pour the oblation of my heart's-blood, I lay the offering of my crucified affections. O thou God of truth!" continued he, as the responsibilities of the hour rolled back upon his memory, "let not my faculties, at this awful moment, be darkened by the clouds of passion. Let them be clear, and strong, and irresistible, that innocence may come forth uninjured from the lion's den of oppression, and the majesty of a sin-avenging law be sustained in the sight of God and man."

Under the influence of the most powerful excitement, Marcus entered the court. It was already crowded, for the case was one which awakened the deepest interest in the whole community. The youth, sex, and personal qualities of the murdered female, the extreme youth, interesting appearance, and previously unspotted reputation of the accused, the poor, widowed mother, and the brilliant reputation of Marcus, whose services were known to be gratuitous, all created an eager interest in the trial, and a desire to witness its process. The prisoner, whose name was Willie Dale, was brought in, and led to the customary seat. He was a slender youth, with an extremely juvenile countenance, whose pale complexion was contrasted by the dark, smooth hair parted on his fair forehead. Fair even to feminine delicacy was his young face.

How nicely, how carefully was he dressed!—with his snowy-white collar turned back from his neck, and a black ribbon passing underneath, and tied in a loose, graceful knot in front! His mother's hand has arranged those shining locks, which had acquired a rank luxuriance in his close, damp cell. He looked like a victim adorned for sacrifice; and there, in a corner of the room, sat the mother, who, with maternal pride struggling with her despair, had adorned her darling, hoping to soften the stern and iron justice of the law by those juvenile attractions so irresistible in her own estimation. She sat straining her swollen and bloodshot eyes on the face of her boy, as if it were even then to be shut out from her sight for ever. The hopes which she had nourished in her bosom went out in the close air she now breathed, and at the sight of that dark-looking throng. There was something too in the face of Marcus, usually so hope-inspiring, that filled her with dread. His cheeks were flushed, his eye had a burning, restless glance, and there was a sternness on his brow she had never seen before. He must have arrived at the conviction that his cause was hopeless. She read in his altered countenance the death-warrant of her son. Willie too, who had been accustomed to find encouragement from the beaming eyes of Marcus, now, after shrinking back from the curious gaze of the many, the compassionate glances of the few, turned toward him, pale and trembling, ready to sink with new and vague alarm. Marcus met that look of pale despair, and upbraiding himself for his momentary oblivion of him in his self-absorption, smiled on the heart-sick boy, and raised his hand, as if directing him to seek support from on high. That smile seemed to the accused a glimpse of the opening heavens. With a sickly reflection of its lustre on his wasted features, he bent his head, and large drops, gliding downward, dropped on his white collar.

The story of the murder and the circumstances of the arrest were these: Fanny Bird, a very pretty and interesting orphan girl, was apprenticed to a mantuamaker, by whom the Widow Dale, the mother of Willie, was also employed, in

plain needle-work. Mrs. Dale lived in the suburbs of the town, and Fanny was frequently indulged, at the approach of night, in carrying the work to the widow, and taking back that which was completed. It was a recreation to the young girl, after being confined all day to the needle, and her spirits, naturally elastic, generally rose high, during these twilight walks, especially when young Willie Dale was her companion. Willie was what is called a Printer's devil, though in appearance he bore a much greater resemblance to the children of light than of darkness. The evening of the murder Fanny was seen tripping gayly along, with a bright scarlet shawl thrown coquettishly over one shoulder—(Fanny was fond of dress, and whatever she wore seemed to adorn her with peculiar grace)—and a bundle of white linen in her hands. She walked through the central part of the town, and down a narrow alley that led to the more unfrequented portion of it. She had to pass a thicket of pines, with an undergrowth of young oaks, before reaching the dwelling of Mrs. Dale. It was at the entrance of this thicket Willie usually met her, and accompanied her to his mother's. She was seen standing and talking with him just on the edge of the young wood about sundown, conspicuous from her red shawl and snowy-white bundle, among the deep, green shades. They seemed to be disputing about something, and he tried to take something from her hand, which she resisted. About a half-hour afterwards, the same gentleman who had observed them standing under the tall pine trees, in returning into town, was startled by a shrill, piercing cry, as of one in mortal agony, which seemed to proceed from the very heart of the thicket. He plunged into its shades, and right on the brink of a small runnel he beheld, through the thickening shades of twilight, the lifeless and bleeding body of the young girl, and kneeling by her side, holding in his hand a dripping knife, a knife dripping with her blood, was the boy. The scarlet shawl was gone—the linen roll scattered on the ground. The first act of the gentleman was to arrest the boy, thus detected, as it were, in the

very act of murder. In vain Willie, with frantic shrieks, protested his innocence. The bloody knife found in his hand he had purchased that very afternoon, at a well-known store. This fact was proved by attesting witnesses, and it was sufficient to seal his condemnation. It is no wonder that an event so tragic, a murder that seemed so motiveless, should have caused a terrible sensation. It is no wonder that people gathered at the corner of the streets, in the shops and public houses, and talked, and marvelled as they talked. Sweet Fanny Bird was the favourite of the community, and so strong and swelling was the public indignation against Willie, that had he not been shielded by the influence of Marcus, there was danger of his being *lynched* by an excited mob.

As we said before, the hall of the court-house was crowded, and still the crowd continued to increase. A large portion of the audience consisted of the gentler sex, who pleaded their interest in the youthful criminal as an excuse for attending a scene where Marcus Warland was to display his unrivalled eloquence.

It is unnecessary to go through all the minutiæ of a trial. Let it be supposed, that the presiding judge has taken his august position, that the jury, in duodecimal dignity, are ranged before him, and that the state-solicitor and counsel for the prisoner have their appropriate locations. When the oath was administered to the accused, and pressing his pallid lips to the sacred volume, Willie raised his eyes to heaven, and declared with a clear, firm voice, that he was *not guilty*, a low, sobbing *amen* was heard in the corner where his mother sat.

The evidence against the prisoner has been already stated. The chief witnesses were the shop-keeper of whom he had purchased the knife, and the gentleman who had made the discovery of the murdered body, over which he was holding the reeking weapon. He, the last named, was a plain, downright honest man, whose testimony was clear and impressive, and seemed not to leave the faintest doubt of the guilt of the pale boy, who looked as if he were praying for the mountains to

cover him from the gaze of man. And well he might pray, for though the face of Marcus had recovered its usual serenity, it was but one beam of sunshine mid the black cloud of evidence closing around him. The people looked toward Marcus, wondering at his calmness, when he had risked his new-born reputation in so hopeless a cause. They admired his disinterestedness and magnanimity, but wished they had been called forth by a nobler object. The feelings of compassion that the juvenile appearance and sad and innocent-looking countenance of Willie had awakened were transferred to the fair, young orphan, whose bosom his knife had pierced, whose blood had given a darker tinge to the gurgling rill.

The witnesses whom Marcus summoned testified to the irreproachable character of Willie, as well as the industry and piety of his mother. They also bore testimony to the strong affection he had always manifested for the murdered girl. But no evidence was brought forward to neutralize the facts that glared before the eye of the public. His previous innocence and virtue only made his crime more hideous and appalling by force of contrast. It was blood on a snowy surface, looking more red, more deadly from the surrounding whiteness. Making a sign to a gentleman who was near him, and who immediately left the court, Marcus rose, and every eye was turned upon him.

"I perceive, gentlemen of the jury," said he, addressing them with a serious, earnest, and respectful manner, "that there is but one impression in regard to the guilt of the prisoner. As far as human judgment is concerned, his doom is sealed. On your solemn brows I read the sternness, the inflexibility of justice, not the softness of compassion, the relenting of prejudice. Nothing has been brought forward in his defence but the evidence of a spotless life, a life passed in acts of gentleness and kindness, filial devotion, obedience, and love. A boy in the early bloom and springtime of his life, who has walked in your midst in the paths of purity and peace, who has never even been known to yield to those passions which usually swell

high in the youthful bosom, stands before you accused of one of the most awful and unexampled crimes that ever blackened the annals of human guilt. He stands before you in the innocence and beauty of youth, meek, and unmurmuring, bowed down by the weight of the terrible accusation, which might well crush a giant's strength. You have heard the evidence against him. As I said before, *he* has nothing to oppose to it but a blameless life, a life pure from the faintest tinge of evil, whose every act belies the damning accusation. The atrocious crime of having purchased a knife has been proved by attesting witnesses. Every other boy of his age in town is possessor of a similar weapon. Unfortunately, in this southern portion of our land it is considered a necessary badge of manhood, and not three days previous to this awful tragedy, my client was mocked by some of his juvenile companions for being destitute of this heroic distinction. Wounded by an insult that he was too gentle to resent, in an evil hour he purchased the accursed steel, which, by a fatal coincidence of circumstances, was to prove his own destruction. With the glittering instrument in his bosom, whose innocent pulsations never before had pressed against aught so cold and deadly, he went out in the soft and balmy twilight to meet the young girl, who came toward his mother's dwelling, like a morning sunbeam gilding the evening's shade. They met as usual beneath the lofty pines, in the holy hush of Nature's resting time, with every sweet and gracious influence coming into their hearts, with the silent dew and the whispering gale. With the artless exultation of boyhood he exhibited his new-bought treasure, which the young girl playfully snatched from his hand. She admired its gilded sheath and trenchant blade, but she refused to return it, declaring it was too keen, too dangerous a weapon for a hand so gentle and so young. Hiding it beneath the folds of a scarlet shawl, of gauze-like texture, but brilliant dye, she threatened to carry it to his mother, that poor widowed mother, whose sobs are even now distinctly audible. He had an errand which called him to the nearest grocer, and telling his young com-

panion to wait for him in the thicket, and if any one assaulted her, to defend herself with the weapon she had purloined. With a bright smile and rapid step, he turned away to execute his filial commission. Once again he looked back, drawn by an irresistible impulse, to catch one more glimpse of the fair young girl, the morning-star of his boyish hopes and affection. As he saw the flutter of her scarlet drapery through the dark foliage, it was strange, but a sudden chilling thought of blood came into his mind. He wished she had not worn that gorgeous mantle. He shuddered when he remembered the smiling grace with which she had screened the knife within its bosom folds. He was detained longer than he anticipated, and hurried back to the appointed place of meeting. God of the innocent!" exclaimed Marcus, recoiling as if he beheld the spectacle he was describing. "What a sight met the eyes of that fond, loving boy! By the side of a brooklet that gurgles through the thicket lay the youthful maiden, the life-blood gushing from her breast, and giving a gory tinge to the blue waters murmuring near. His own knife dripping with blood was on the ground, where a dark pool was already formed. With a loud, piercing shriek of agony, the boy threw himself at her side, and lifting the blood-stained weapon, wildly pressed it to his pale and quivering lips. At that heart-rending cry, the apparently lifeless girl opened for one moment her glazing eyes, and fixed them on the face of the young lover, who would have died a thousand times over to redeem her from death. 'Oh, Fanny, Fanny!' exclaimed the soul-stricken boy, 'would to God I had died for thee!'"

Here the loud sobs of Willie interrupted the agitated voice of Marcus, and many an echo was heard in different parts of the hall. The tide of sympathy and compassion was now swelling and rolling toward the accused, for Marcus was swaying the hearts of his listeners, and bearing them on with him as with the strength of a mighty wind.

"And now, most honoured gentlemen," continued the pleader, "I appeal to you, in the name of nature and of nature's God,

and ask you if you can believe in the possibility of that boy's guilt. The moment I saw him, when he stretched out his imploring arms, and entreated me to save him from the scaffold's doom, I felt his innocence to my heart's core. Had an angel come down from the skies, and proclaimed with trumpet-tongue his freedom from crime, my conviction could hardly have been stronger and deeper. The statement I have given you I received from him in his grated cell, the open Bible before him, in the presence of his weeping mother and the great and invisible God. I believe it, gentlemen. I believe every word of it, and so do you. I read it in your altered glances; the softened expression of your grave and solemn countenances. I see the dawn of Christian mercy on your stern brows. Some monster, concealed in the shade of the thicket, murdered the lonely maiden, and robbed her of the scarlet mantle that probably attracted his brutal eye. Strange how little stress has been laid on the mysterious disappearance of that fatal shawl! a fact that proves irrefragably that other hands than Willie's had been busy in the dread transaction. I have never lost sight of this one moment since I enlisted in the cause. It was by this I was resolved to prove the innocence of my client, and I *can* do it. I wanted first to appeal to your understandings as men; your consciences as Christians; your hearts as fathers, brothers, and sons. I wanted you to have the joy and pride of feeling that you had acquitted him, even before conviction was forced upon you, as it soon will be. For there may be a case brought before this honourable judge and honourable jury when the decision will be left to the judgment of man, unsupported by the facts I am enabled, thank God, to bring forward. Deal gently, cautiously, gentlemen, with human life and human feelings. Think of the dark hours this poor boy has passed in the prison gloom to which he has been consigned. Think of the visions of the tightening cord; the ignominious scaffold; the unhonoured grave; the blasted memory, that must have haunted, like hideous spectres, his pallet of straw. Think of the anguish of a

widowed mother, whose prayers have been wearying Heaven day and night for justice. Justice for her victim-boy! They can never be indemnified for these. Years may roll on after years, and the shadow will linger over their hearts. Yea, when the dark locks of that boy are whitened with the frost of age—if God grants him length of days—dark memories of life will eclipse its noonday brightness; cold memories will chill its warmth, and all beauty and gladness will pass away from earth. Oh! it is a fearful thing for frail, fallible, erring man, to sit in judgment on his brother man, and breathe the words which may cause unquenchable, undying remorse through the unwasting ages of eternity."

He paused, and so deep was the impression created by his address, it is more than probable that Willie would have been acquitted had not most extraordinary proofs of his innocence been produced.

There was a bustle near the door, and the gentleman who had disappeared at a sign from Marcus, re-entered, dragging, rather than leading, a figure, whose appearance caused an instantaneous sensation in the whole court. Suppressed laughter and murmurs of astonishment were heard, mingled with a slight scream from the ladies. The sheriff called to "order." The judge passed his hand over his face before he could restore it to its accustomed gravity of expression. The new-comer was indeed a most extraordinary-looking person, such as perhaps was never before called into a court of justice. It was a negro, well known in and about the town by the name of *Idiot Ben*, one of those unfortunate beings whom the Almighty has set apart from their kind, to show how poor and degraded is the human form without the indwelling deity of mind. He was hideously ugly. His mouth, of tremendous size, resembled a large drawer of an old-fashioned mahogany bureau, and out of that drawer a tongue was for ever hanging, like a piece of thick, red flannel, for it was of most surprising redness, presenting a physiological phenomenon by its depth of hue. Hanging his head, lolling his tongue, and shuffling his feet,

Idiot Ben was dragged before the astonished assembly, at the bidding of Marcus, whose countenance retained the same serene and earnest gravity of expression it had worn the last half hour.

The state solicitor objected to the admission of the negro into court. His colour alone would prevent him from bearing witness; his idiocy from taking a binding oath. He was astonished at the young gentleman for introducing so strong an anomaly into the courts of justice.

"I admit," said Marcus, "all the learned solicitor has advanced; but this man, black and idiotic as he is, will make the innocence of the accused appear as clear as the noonday sun. By the foolish things of this world God confoundeth the wisdom of the wise. To talk of informality at a moment like this, when life, that God-given life, which man should never lightly take away, hangs trembling on a spider's thread, reminds me—pardon me, sir, for introducing the incident—of the drowning gentleman, who, when about to be seized by the strong arms of the deliverer, who was wrestling with the waves for his rescue, exclaimed, 'Excuse me, sir, I have never had the honour of being introduced to you.'

"I appeal to your honour," continued he, turning to the judge, with a dignity which sat with wonderful grace and ease upon his youth; "I appeal to you, sir, in the name of the living God, not to allow etiquette and formality to outweigh human life and reputation in the scales of justice. I demand permission for this negro to remain in court. I demand to be sworn as a witness myself, that I may testify to facts which, if not revealed before this earthly tribunal, will rise up in judgment against us on that day for which all other days were made."

The judge, admitting the truth and strength of this appeal, bowed his head, and Marcus, taking the solemn oath Idiot Ben was incapacitated from uttering, placed himself by the witnesses who had been examined. As he passed near the negro, he drew a red silk handkerchief from his bosom, and with apparent carelessness suffered it to float in the air. Ben, darting

out his tongue like a great black serpent, leaped toward it, and grasped it with both hands.

"Ben want it," he cried, trying to put it in his mouth; "Ben will have it."

A loud murmur went through the hall. The excitement became intense. Marcus suffered the handkerchief to remain in the grasp of the now grinning idiot, who clutched it with maniac violence, rolling his eyes from one side to the other, while he tried to conceal it from the gaze of the audience.

"You have now witnessed," said Marcus, "what will furnish a clue to this dark mystery. We may account for the idiosyncracy of Idiot Ben in some measure, by observing the peculiar formation of his head and neck. It is well known that the fierce bull is attracted by the hue of scarlet, and the rabid dog foams with more demoniac frenzy at the sight of glowing red. What there is in this gorgeous colour to inflame the passions of wild animals I cannot define, unless it is its similitude to blood. But it is certain that the head of this unfortunate negro has the same contour as the bull, and his neck is thick and swelling where it meets the chin, like the terrible bloodhounds. From the moment I heard the circumstances of the murder, a fact which seemed to have but little weight with others was a subject to me of the deepest and most serious consideration. I was convinced that the same hand which had shed the blood of the maiden had robbed her bleeding body of the scarlet drapery which enfolded it. On this single point, I knew, hung the life of my young client.

"One evening, about the hour when the nightshades begin to fall, I was passing through the central street, and found myself opposite the very store where the prisoner purchased the fatal knife at such a costly price. The showy articles which hang from the exterior of the door, to attract the vagrant eye, were still fluttering in the breeze. Among them I noticed a scarf of brilliant scarlet, and crouching near it was that dark, misshapen form. He touched the scarf, he even lapped the bright silk with his huge red tongue. Perceiving

my eyes fixed steadfastly upon him, he skulked away, like a poor hungry dog detected in stealing the bone he covets. I followed him. I had seen this unfortunate and apparently harmless being before, sometimes gazing at the sun with that vacant eye, vacant but strong and unblinking as the eagle's, and sometimes prowling, like the forest beast, in the shadows of the woods. 'Ben, do you love red?' I asked, when I had overtaken him. 'Ben loves red,' he immediately answered, ''cause it pretty.' I happened to have in my pocket a handkerchief of a deep crimson dye, resembling the one he is now grasping with insane delight. I held it toward him, watching his countenance as I did so. Its dull vacancy changed to animal rapacity. I retreated, holding the handkerchief beyond his reach. He leaped up, endeavouring to clutch it, uttering wild and unintelligible exclamations. At length I yielded it, and with a low chuckling sound of exultation, he hid it in his bosom. 'What are you going to do with it?' I inquired, feeling that I had found the clue to this Egyptian labyrinth of crime. 'Ben hide it, but Ben no tell where,' replied the idiot, looking at me with the ferocious cunning of a wild beast. I questioned him respecting the hiding-place of his treasures, but he only answered, with a thousand indescribable grimaces, 'Ben no tell where.'

"Sir, your honour," continued Marcus, with deepening earnestness, "you may be assured that I did not give sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids, till my suspicions, or rather my belief was changed to conviction and certainty. Thank heaven! it was a moonlight night, and the rays came down in silver showers on the shades whose depths I sought. It was the thicket where the smoke of innocent blood so lately went up to heaven, giving a deeper horror to the conscious wood. But I saw not the form of the murdered maiden flitting by me in that pale, ghostly lustre. I thought of the imprisoned boy, over whom the scaffold's doom was impending. As the night-wind blew the boughs of the young oaks toward me, they seemed to me the outstretching of his imploring

arms. In the murmurs of the blood-stained rill I heard his voice of patient agony. Every gray rock, that was movable by the hand of man, I hurled from its ancient throne, in search of the hiding-place of the idiot's treasures. Among those young oaks there is one ancestral tree, which towers in patriarchal majesty above its verdant children. It contains a hollow, round which the green leaves form an almost impervious veil, and which, like New England's charter oak, might well be converted into a secret cabinet. Lying at the foot of this tall elder of the forest, I beheld the Idiot Ben, with his tongue of flame gleaming in the moonlight, though leaden slumbers closed his eyes. In the leafy nest I have described, I discovered poor Fanny's fatal shawl, with a piece of linen dabbled in blood, and wrapped around them my own crimson handkerchief!" Here a sudden cry from Willie drew the eyes which were gazing with intense excitement on Marcus toward the boy, whose innocence was now manifest to all. His face was hueless, and he fell forward on an arm that was involuntarily extended for his support. The mother tried to reach him, but she was wedged in by the crowd, incapable of motion. Water was passed from hand to hand till it could be applied to the fainting prisoner, fainting from the sudden transition from despair to hope. While they were restoring Willie to consciousness, the judge appointed several gentlemen to go to the thicket, according to the directions of Marcus, and bring the articles concealed in the hollow tree. In the mean time, Marcus resumed his testimony.

"Your honour may not be aware that Idiot Ben has not long been a denizen of our town. He came it is scarcely known when, whence nobody seemed to know. Begging from day to day his crust of bread and morsel of meat, and sleeping at night with the conies in the rock or the cattle in the field, no one has troubled himself about his aimless, soulless existence. Obtaining from him some hint with regard to his former place of residence, and following the indication, I have ascertained that this is not the first time that his mysterious pas-

sion for scarlet has led him on to deeds of blood and violence. This gentleman can prove the truth of my assertion."

The gentleman to whom Marcus referred was a witness he had summoned from the county where Idiot Ben formerly resided. He stated that a few years before the community of which he was a member was startled by a murder as singular and apparently as motiveless as the one now under judicial examination. A little child, who was dressed in a scarlet frock, was found bathed in blood, destitute of her showy garment. The deepest mystery involved the transaction, till the little red garment, stained with a yet deeper red, was discovered in the possession of Ben, who was immediately arrested and imprisoned. Soon after his imprisonment, several white men escaped from jail, and Ben must have fled at the same time. Where he had been wandering no one knew. Nothing had been heard of the unfortunate creature till the inquiries of Marcus concerning him recalled the remembrance of the dreadful tragedy of which he had been the hero.

The exhibition of the shawl and blood-stained linen was hardly necessary to confirm the innocence of Willie; but when they were brought in court and unrolled before the judge and jury, a noise went through the hall, like the dull roar of the ocean. But when Marcus, with an irrepressible impulse, seized the scarlet mantle and waved it like a victorious banner over his head, and Idiot Ben, protruding his red serpent-tongue, shuffled forward, exclaiming, "That are Ben's —Ben want it—Ben will have it," a loud, simultaneous shout burst forth from the assembly, reverberating through the walls of the court-room, and rolling out of doors and windows, proclaimed through the length and breadth of the street and public square the innocence of Willie.

It is unnecessary to proceed in the closing details of a trial which terminated in the triumphant acquittal of the prisoner, and the imprisonment of poor Ben, not for personal punishment, but public safety. The populace, in their enthusiasm, would have borne Marcus on their shoulders from the hall, if

he would have permitted such an apotheosis; but, baffled in their attempt to deify the young orator whose eloquence had excited them to momentary intoxication, they seized hold of the weak and slender prisoner, and carried him aloft with deafening acclamations. With his long, dark hair floating back from his white forehead, his pale face lustrous with gratitude and joy, his hands and eyes uplifted to heaven, in a kind of devout extasy, Willie was borne along beyond the limits of the courtyard. The moment he was released, he flew to him who had saved him from an ignominious death. With a heart too full for words, he caught his hands and pressed them to his heart and his lips, and then, borne down by the weight of his emotions, he sank at his feet weeping and sobbing, and wrapped his arms around his knees. The widow, too, lifting her trembling hands to heaven, prayed the God of the widow and the Father of the orphan to bless him for ever and ever. Marcus passed his hand over his moistened eyes. Life could not be a wilderness, bedewed by such heaven-born showers. A divine philanthropy warmed his soul. It was nobler to live for the interests of mankind than for individual happiness. The boy, whose life Providence had made him the honoured instrument of saving from a death of shame, should henceforth be the object of his peculiar interest and care. The pious and grateful widow should never know a want or sorrow that he could avert.

As soon as he could free himself from the almost oppressive congratulations of the crowd, he sought the solitude of his room. There on his knees he blessed the God of Innocence and Youth, the Great God of truth and justice, for having given him a mind capable of benefiting his fellow-man, a heart open to the wants and sufferings of oppressed humanity. He renewed the solemn dedication of himself to the sacred Trio whose altar he had elevated on the ruins of Love. Then he took the letters of Florence, the ring of betrothal, and every pledge of faith and affection he had so carefully cherished, and sealing them in a packet, sent them by express to Wood Lawn.

It seemed that all the elements which formed the being of Marcus were to pass through the refiner's fire. About a week after the trial a letter from Katy arrived, announcing the dangerous illness of their father. In less than an hour he was on his way to Hickory Hill, over whose shades a shade deeper than the forest gloom was now hovering.

CHAPTER XV.

"Fair was that young girl and meek,
With a pale, transparent cheek,
And a deep-fringed, violet eye,
Seeking in sweet shade to lie,
Or if raised to glance above,
Dim with its own dews of love.
The clouds in spirit-like descent
Their deep thoughts by one touch had blent,
And the wild storms linked them to each other—
How dear can *sorrow* make a brother!"—HEMANS.

"Murmur glad waters by—
Faint gales with happy sigh
Come wandering o'er
That green and mossy bed,
Where on a gentle head
Storms beat no more."—IBID.

WHEN Marcus was about halfway on his sad and solitary journey, he met a very elegant equipage, which was accompanied by a gentleman on horseback. So absorbed was he by his meditations, he came upon them before he was aware of their approach; but at one glance he recognised the coal-black eyes of Delaval, on whose brow a cloud as black was resting. No sign of greeting was exchanged between the two haughty equestrians. Marcus felt the darkness gathering over his own face. Leaning back in the carriage, with listless languor, her arms folded in a lace shawl, he had a glimpse of Florence. Raising her eyes dreamily, as the shadow of the horseman fell on the carriage window, she beheld Marcus Warland, and a quick vibration of light, cold and dazzling as the night-gleam of the aurora borealis, passed over her features. They passed each other thus—they, whose hearts at their last part-

ing throbbed against each other with mutual pulsations, whose lips exchanged the most sacred pledge of love and faith. How estranged, how altered now! Could that pale, cold, icy-looking girl be the bright, impassioned L'éclair?—that haughty, stormy-browed young man, the warm-hearted and impulsive Delaval? Was he indeed Marcus Warland? and was he hastening to perhaps a dying parent? This last interrogation subdued his rebellious thoughts. Death! the great peace-maker—Death! the stern rebuker of passion. As its shadow glided on before him, chill and mournful, all present interests were lost in its awful eclipse. A few short years, and those resplendent eyes, whose altered glance had just now filled him with such anguish and indignation, would be rayless and closed; those once love-breathing, now disdainful lips, clay-cold and wan. Youth, beauty, and love—what were they but a dream? What was life itself but a dream? the dream of a feverish, troubled sleep, from which the soul would awake in the morning-light of an eternal day? Continuing his journey through the night, Marcus rode on under a midnight moon, his spirit bathed in its serene and solemn splendour. A thousand times had he gazed on its unearthly beauty, and felt the dominant passion of the hour glorified by its influence. A thousand times had the tide of his heart swelled to overflowing, beneath its sweet, celestial attraction. Sometimes, when he saw it riding at anchor on the azure waves of heaven, like a ship with silver sails and majestic motion, he beheld an image of his own ambition, so lofty in its destination, so unswerving in its course. Again, when it rose behind an argent cloud, leaning softly over to gaze upon its image in some limpid wave that seemed panting to receive it, he saw a type of love, mirroring itself in some pure, transparent heart. Now, as he gazed up to the beautiful mirror of the sun, shining so high and lonely in the dark blue zenith of midnight, it was to him an emblem of Faith, reflecting to the pilgrim of Time, through the nightshade of sorrow and care, another and heavenlier home. Oh! could Florence but look into the heart

she so deeply yet innocently wronged! But here we see through a glass darkly, even in our clearest moments; and when the mirror is shivered by passion, what frightful distortion disfigures the image it reflects!

"My father!" were the only words he uttered, when he arrived at Bellamy Place, and Katy flew into his arms.

"He lives—he is better," she cried, "but still weak and suffering. Oh! Marcus, dear, dear brother, how I have longed to see you—to be near you once more."

Katy was always pale, and her eyes had a pensive expression, when unillumined by a smile; but her paleness was that of the white rose in its bloom, sweet and fair to look upon. Now her cheek had a sickly pallor, and her countenance was very sad. Was it filial anxiety alone that caused this? or was it blended with some secret grief? He thought of the dark-browed Delaval, and felt a conviction that his sister's happiness was wrecked, as well as his own. Never had he loved her with such heart-aching tenderness.

"My Katy, my darling, my own sweet, precious sister," he cried, kissing her colourless cheek. "Mrs. Bellamy, my more than mother!" Her arms too were round him, her mild, benignant countenance emanating unspeakable love. Mr. Bellamy greeted him with all the affection of a father and all the pride of a man. He was proud of the glorious boy he had reared, for his fame had gone abroad into the land.

"My father!" again repeated Marcus, grasping Mr. Bellamy's hand. "Is he really better? Is his life in danger?"

"There is danger," answered Mr. Bellamy; "but there is hope also; so Doctor Manning says, who never deludes his friends."

Katy led her brother to the room where their father lay, at whose bedside Milly was seated, in her ancient costume, waving the feathers of mingled green, gold, and purple over the head of her master. He was asleep, and their gentle entrance did not awake him. Milly could scarcely repress a loud cry of joy at beholding him, but she did, though the big drops burst from her eyes and rolled down her face. Holding the

faithful creature's hand in his, he stood looking at the altered but placid features of his father. He had been suffering from a lingering disease, which had gradually reduced his strength, without giving him acute pain, and though he was pale and emaciated, there was a peacefulness, there was even a smile on his sleeping countenance that was soothing to look upon.

There is certainly a magnetism in the eye, which the spirit feels, even through the prison-bars of sleep. Warland awoke, while his son was gazing sadly, silently upon him, and stretched out his feeble arms. Marcus bent to their enclosure, and laid his cheek against his father's.

"My son," said the invalid, "I bless God for this. I feared we never would meet again in this world."

"Many happy meetings, I trust, are in store for us yet, my father," answered Marcus, with a quivering lip. His heart had less hope than his words.

"Yes, Marcus, I trust so too," cried Warland, raising his eyes to heaven.

The return of his son seemed to renovate his exhausted system, and for a few days he appeared better and stronger, was able to sit up in bed, supported by pillows, and to converse without much apparent fatigue. The presence of Marcus was the balm of Gilead to his soul, and he had a *kind Physician near.*

Mr. Warland slept. Aunt Milly, as usual, presided over his slumbers. Marcus took the hand of Katy, and drew it through his arm.

"Let us walk," said he, going out into the open air. "You look wilted, dear Katy. Such close confinement does not agree with you."

"It is not that, brother," she answered, with a sigh. They walked under the shade of the hickories, and sat down on a little bench Hannibal had made expressly for her.

"What is it then, my sister? Do *you* carry in your bosom a wounded heart?" He accented unconsciously on the *you.* Katy looked at him through her long lashes.

"I received about a week ago," she said, "a letter from

Delaval, so strange, so inexplicable—I know not what to think of it. It has made me very unhappy."

"Will you show it to me, Katy?"

"I fear—I dread. He speaks of you in such a—such a—manner—I can't comprehend it."

"I ought to see it. I ought to know how he speaks of me, Katy. Much may depend upon it."

Katy trembled. Her lips turned as pale as her cheeks. Marcus put his arm round her.

"Fear not, sweet sister," said he, "I will do nothing to add to your unhappiness, whatever he may say. Could I think of deeds of violence while our father lies languishing on that sick bed?"

"No, indeed. I know you could not. But, oh Marcus! you cannot think how wretched I have felt to think that letter should cause me more unhappiness than all our father's sufferings. How wicked, how selfish I am! yet I think it is what he says of you makes me wretched. I will get the letter," she added, going into the house, with a step very different from her usual light footfall. She soon returned, and placed it in his outstretched hand. Its brief and incoherent contents were these:

"KATY—I love you better than life, you know I do. From the first moment I saw you to this—this dark and troubled one—you have been the polar star of my soul. Every vision of future happiness has been inspired by you. And now, something dreadful has come between us. Something that I fear will destroy the happiness of all. Your brother, Katy, whom I so loved and trusted; whom I verily believed one of the hierarchs of heaven, so much he seemed lifted above his kind; he, the friend and brother of my soul, has insulted my sister beyond forgiveness or remedy. With unexampled ingratitude, and matchless cruelty, he has repaid 'a love passing the love of woman.' Katy, I love, I adore you. I shall never cease to do so. But as long as one spark of vitality burns in my being, I must detest, abhor, and despise your brother.

"GEORGE DELAVAL."

"Oh! what have I done? How rash, how wrong I have been!" cried Katy, recoiling from the indignant fire that blazed in the eyes of Marcus, as, hurling the letter to the ground, he sprang up and was hurrying from her. "Stop, Marcus. Don't leave me. Only tell me what he means. What have you done that he should use such dreadful language? I know you cannot have done any thing wrong, never. I hate him for saying so. I never shall love him any more. You don't look at me, Marcus. You won't speak to me. Alas! I have done very wrong, but I meant to do right."

Marcus turned at that beseeching voice, and an expression of pity softened the fierce splendour of his countenance. He came back and sat down by her on the little shaded bench.

"Heaven knows what I have done, Katy. I do not. I will tell you all I know." He then related the history of Rosa, the return of his letters, the chain and locket, as well as his subsequent letter of explanation. That a circumstance capable of so simple and honourable an explanation should have caused such an insulting termination of friendship and love, seemed incomprehensible to both, and as unpardonable as incomprehensible. Katy had a good deal of honest pride concealed under her gentle, loving exterior. She adored her brother, and an injury inflicted on him stung her to the quick of her heart. Before she saw him, Delaval's letter had made her unspeakably wretched, from its mysterious accusations of Marcus. They filled her with a vague horror. That Delaval should accuse him without cause, she tried not to believe; that Marcus had given him cause, she *could* not believe. Now, when she heard the only possible reason that could be assigned, indignation lifted her above the weakness of sorrow. She was very beautiful in her anger. It gave such life and spirit to her face.

"That dear Rosa!" she cried, "how I love her. She did what I longed to do—nursed you on your sick bed, and soothed you back to health and life. To grudge her the possession of a simple locket, and one of those beautiful locks of yours, and

think it an insult to them, seems shocking. To take it away from the poor girl, how wicked! She must look as Cora did. And you do not know where she is, and whether you will ever see her again."

Katy was so excited by the wrongs of Rosa, she forgot her own. She hated the proud and jealous Florence, and wondered sisters could influence brothers so much. She wished she had never known Delaval, never thought of love, or allowed a "stranger to intermeddle with her joy."

"Let us go to our father," said Marcus. "I shall not feel safe from my own passions till I stand by his sick bed."

"I will follow," said Katy. "I see Mrs. Bellamy beckoning me from her room."

Marcus went alone to his father's apartment. He found him awake, and refreshed by his repose. Taking Aunt Milly's place, and telling her to go and rest, he seated himself by the bed's head, so that his father could not look into his face. Warland took his son's hand, and drew him gently toward him.

"I want to see you, my son," he said, "as well as to feel the balm of your presence. What a feverish hand is this!" Then looking fixedly upon him, "Marcus, you are greatly moved. If it is the thought of *my* danger, you must not let it unman you thus. Submission to our God is easy. You will find it so, my son."

Marcus was too true, too ingenuous to allow his father to impute to filial sorrow the cloud which warring passions had left upon his brow.

"Father, submission to God may be learned. Whatever blow he may inflict, though it should rend my heart in twain, I trust I can say, His holy will be done. But, when we suffer from the inconstancy, and injustice, and insults of man, oh! father, teach me how to curb my rebel passions; tell me what I ought to do!"

"Ah! my son, has it come so soon, this bitter knowledge of the injustice of man? Yet, this is the natural consequence

of your growing fame. It is only in the sunshine the shadow is seen."

"No, sir, it is not envy. But let me tell you all. Your wisdom shall guide me, and I feel that your sympathy will console. Father, if you were not lying here on this sick bed, my hand would be grasping the avenging steel. It burns for redress. This is the fever that makes my pulse throb so quick, and fills my veins with a boiling fluid."

Then Marcus related the history of his estrangement from Florence and Delaval without any reservation, the struggles he felt on the morning of the trial, his self-conquest, and determination to devote himself henceforth to the highest and holiest duties. He repeated the contents of Delaval's letter to Katy, which she had not shown to her father, declaring his conviction that her happiness was destroyed, as well as his own. Mr. Warland listened with breathless attention, and when Marcus had concluded laid his hand impressively on his, and said,—

"And you believe that Rosa is the cause of all this?"

"The innocent one, father. What else could the return of the locket to me imply?"

"Marcus, I feel constrained to reveal to you what I promised to keep secret while you lay sick and wounded. Had you no suspicions that Rosa was other than she seemed?"

"None, father, none."

"Yet Rosa and Florence are one."

"Good heavens, father, it is not possible!"

"It is even so. Before she entered your sick room, she sent for me, telling me her real name, and placing herself under my protection. She told me, the knowledge that I was with you emboldened her to take the step she had done. She dared not expose herself to the censure of the world by appearing in her true character; but maddened at the intelligence of your danger, she had braved every thing but contumely, to be near and minister to your sufferings. How tenderly, how faithfully she ministered to them, with what virgin delicacy

and modesty she maintained her character as a lady, while she preserved her disguise as a servant, your own memory can bear witness."

Marcus listened to this astounding revelation like one awaking from a nightmare. He could not realize its truth. Yet, when he recalled the form of Rosa, the contour of her chin and neck, a certain graceful motion of the head peculiar to Florence, he wondered at his own stupidity. Then he recollected the darkened chamber, the mulatto dye, the coloured handkerchief that bound up her magnificent tresses, the deep green shade that covered her brilliant eyes and the upper part of her face, and the simple calico frock and white apron that clothed her beautiful figure, and the disguise did seem impenetrable.

"Could Florence do all this for me, and then cast me from her?" he exclaimed. "How unfathomable is the mystery of her conduct!"

"Believe me, Marcus, some secret enemy has been at work, and is probably still busy in undermining your interests. She who could prove her love as Florence Delaval has done is no light, capricious damsel, actuated merely by impulse or passion. She has a depth and truth of character I have never seen in one so young. You have often told me, Marcus, that you had never known me fail in my estimate of man or woman. I am willing to stake my life—ah, that is of little value, it is fast waning away,—I will only say, nothing could shake my confidence in the strength and purity of her affection in her self-sacrificing and generous nature."

"Bless you, father—not once, but ten thousand times—for this undoubting trust. You make me blush for my own injustice, as much as I do for my blindness and stupidity, in not recognising L'éclair through any disguise. But surely I must have known her sweet and silver voice. The ear cannot be deceived."

Mr. Warland smiled. "Florence has all a woman's wit. I saw her myself put cotton between her rosy lips, to thicken

that sweet and silver voice. She closed every avenue to detection, and her disguise was so perfect, I do not wonder that you never penetrated it."

"Had you ever seen her in the splendour of her beauty, father, you *would* wonder that I did not discover some gleam that would show her identity."

"I saw her once," said Mr. Warland, "without her disguise. It was one evening when you were sleeping under the influence of a powerful anodyne. She took me in another room, and stepping into an adjoining closet, soon returned, another and yet the same. She had washed the stain from her face and hands, unbound the handkerchief from her rich curling hair, and taken the shade from her dazzling eyes. I never saw such a transformation. Coming toward me, and placing her hands with endearing frankness in mine, she said, 'I wanted you to see me as I am for one moment. I am dark by nature, but not quite a mulatto. Do you think it strange that Marcus does not recognise me?' Marcus, my dear boy, I cannot tell you how strangely I was affected at that moment. To look at this magnificent creature, and think it was for love of you, my son, that she assumed the guise of a menial, braved the displeasure of her friends and the risk of discovery, was enough to move the heart of any man. I yearned to take her in my arms to my heart, and tell her that I loved her as a daughter. And I did, Marcus. I shall never see her again, but bear to her my parting blessing. As sure as there is a moon in yonder heavens, she loves you, and an enemy is trying to sever her from you."

A sudden faintness came over him, and he sank back on the pillow. Marcus, in alarm, presented a cordial to his lips, which soon revived him.

"This has been too much for you, father," said Marcus, with bitter self-reproach. "I am killing you by my selfishness. Do not speak again."

"One word more, Marcus. This enemy, I believe—but—you will discover him."

Closing his eyes, he pressed the hand of his son, who, struck by his words, felt as if thick scales were falling from his eyes, and thick clouds rolling away from his strangely darkened understanding. Marcus did not forget to repeat to his sister the conversation he had had with his father, and Katy slept that night with a somewhat lightened heart.

Mr. Warland gradually grew weaker, till even Doctor Manning, the all-hopeful physician, gave up hope. But his disease seemed scarcely to diminish the strength of his lungs, and his mind was clear and calm to the last.

"There is retribution in this world, as well as in the next," he said. "I am dying the victim of my early excesses. Nature sooner or later avenges her violated laws, and assists the judgment of the Almighty."

Seeing Milly, who was standing by the bedside, he held out his hand to her, with great emotion.

"The blessing of God and that of a dying man rest upon you, faithful friend and affectionate guardian of my orphan children. When bereft of a mother, and neglected by a father, with none to cherish and protect, you fostered them in your arms of love, and shielded them from poverty and wrong. To their gratitude and kindness I commend you; to the care of God I commit you."

"Oh, master," sobbed the weeping negro, "you allos good to Milly."

"Was I good," said the contrite man, "when I would have sold you, in face of my solemn vow, had not my boy stepped between me and my sin and shame?"

"Don't speak of it, master, don't. I forgot all that, long time ago—the Lord be praised, I have."

"I love to speak of it," replied her master, with deep humility. "It magnifies the mercy that has saved me—the love that has forgiven."

The day before he died he called Marcus to him and said: "I have one request to make. It matters little where our dust is laid, when the spark that animates it is fled. Yet we

all have our wishes on this solemn subject. Your mother is laid in the tomb of her fathers, far away from here. They came, obedient to her dying prayer, and bore her where I may not follow. But there is one spot, one sweet and quiet spot, where I would fain sleep in my last repose. We have often sat together there, while the pensive voice of the fountain murmured in our ears. Bury me, my son, near the Long Moss Spring, where the river's roar and the fountain's gush shall be my requiem. When you told me of poor Simon's lonely grave, I thought how pleasant it would be to bear him company."

"Even so, father," cried Marcus, "it shall be as your soul desires. Your children will one day come and lie down by your side. It always seemed to me that the sleep of the grave would be sweet, near the sound of those lulling waters."

Mr. Warland died. But so triumphant was his faith, so peaceful his departure, that death was disarmed of its terrors and grief of its sting. Nature mourned, but religion consoled.

They carried his remains to the lovely spot his dying lips had designated. Mr. and Mrs. Bellamy accompanied their adopted children. It was the desire of Hannibal to go with Milly; and these two faithful friends, and we may add *benefactors,* of both families, followed him they loved to his quiet grave.

With indescribable emotions Mr. and Mrs. Bellamy beheld a scene, consecrated in their remembrance by the most dear and interesting associations. To the apparently accidental circumstance of lingering one night under that humble roof, they were indebted for years of happiness. They had been happy in the friendship and companionship of the good and gifted man, who was then lost to society, a slave to one evil passion—happy in the love and gratitude of the lovely girl, the noble young man, who but for them might have remained in the obscurity of a ferryman's cabin. They looked at Marcus and recalled their last thought—a spirit like his would have forced its way to distinction, though mountains and rocks opposed its path. It would have fulfilled its glorious

destiny. Theirs was the honour and the joy of assisting its upward progress.

It was a solemn yet not melancholy burial. The beautiful fountain smiled and sang, as if it welcomed a bride to the magnolia bower. The *Long Moss* gently waved and curled against the sides of the snowy basin, and the water-lily's undulating stem glided like a green serpent under the waves. On the side opposite to that, where the old soldier rested, they made the grave of Warland. There they were laid, representatives of two distinct races, the black and white, laid in those slumbers that know no awaking, till the Apocalyptic angel shall come, with one foot on sea and one on land, and declare, after the seven thunders are hushed, that the mystery of God is finished, and that Time shall be no more.

The family entered the cabin. Milly lingered by the grave of Simon, and discoursed to Hannibal of his Christian virtues and surprising learning. "He sent me all his arnings," said Milly, "sewed up like a charm, in a leather bag. I wouldn't use it, 'cause it's sacred money. I'm going to get Master Marcus to have a monument for to petrify his mem'ry, at this 'xpense. The Scriptures tell us to 'tend to all sich things. Noah bought a cave to bury his wife in, 'fore the big flood came and swallow him up, in the mouth of the whale."

"I heern Master Bellamy say," replied Hannibal, whose thoughts had been wandering to the little green enclosure where Cora slept, "he 'tended to build a sorter temple here, 'cause he call it holy ground. Folk, sailing 'long the river see it and ask 'Who that there?' Then somebody say 'Good Master Warland,'—and—what that old nigger's name, Milly?"

"He wa'n't a nigger, no how," said Milly, indignantly. "He preacher of the gospel, and gentleman of euller. Everybody 'spect ole Simon, and raal niggers take off their hat when they speak in his presence. When the Lord take me to heaven, I pray young master to let me come too and lie 'long side of good old Simon and blessed ole master."

"When *I* done dead," said Hannibal, a shade of melancholy

deepening on his sable face, "I gonter sleep where Cora sleep, and the white angels come down and cuvver us both all up with their 'visible wings. I willing to die, jist to be where she gone to."

We hope you are not weary because we have brought you once again to the borders of the *Long Moss Spring*. It is the last time we shall ask you to bear us company to that sweet and hallowed spot. Farewell, fair and peaceful waters. Farewell, ye green and silver-tinted plumes, ye bright-leaved, verdant hollies. Superb magnolia, sentinel of the lonely dead, we bid thee too farewell. Perchance some young lovers, after crossing the river's tide, may seat themselves under thy shades, and write their vows on the waxen petals of thy regal blossoms, heedless of the dust that consecrates the fountain's margin. But to us, perennial Spring, thou speakest of thrilling memories. We love thy name. It is embalmed in our recollection, and it sounds like music to our ears. Sweet *Long Moss Spring*—Farewell!

CHAPTER XVI.

"Then fare thee well—I'd rather make
My bower upon some icy lake,
When thawing suns begin to shine,
Than trust to love so false as thine."—MOORE.

"Upon his brow shame is ashamed to sit."—SHAKSPEARE.

THE shadow of death lingers long on the threshold over which his footsteps have passed. When the family returned to Bellamy Place, every thing looked sad and changed. The foliage of the hickories had a darker tinge; even the negroes that thronged round the carriage to welcome them home seemed blacker in hue. The echoes of their footsteps, as they walked through the closed and silent rooms, sounded like "voices from the dead." They had returned, but one loved and revered was left behind. There was a vacant chair, which

would never more be filled; there was a dark chamber that no one wished to enter; a name each lip trembled as it repeated.

Katy threw herself into her brother's arms, and wept. "Oh! Marcus," she repeated, "it seemed to me all the way home as if I should find him here."

"He is here, my sister," answered he, "he is in our hearts, where we shall ever find him. Those only die who leave behind no memory of virtue."

It was a sad moment to all when Marcus again left them, but he had professional engagements which he was bound in honour to fulfil. He was resolved too, according to his father's dying counsels, to visit Wood Lawn, and demand an explanation of the mysterious charges against him. The proof that Florence had given of self-sacrificing love made the immolation of his pride an act of justice and gratitude. His father too had left him a sacred trust, his orphan sister's happiness. If his own were irretrievably lost, *that* could never be restored.

"I will find out mine enemy," cried the young man, "though I rend asunder Bastile bars to lay hold of him. He shall not escape my just and righteous vengeance."

While the inmates of Bellamy Place had been receiving the solemn lesson of mortality into their chastened hearts, the young master and mistress of Wood Lawn had been trying to escape from themselves by every means their wealth permitted them to indulge. But Florence carried an arrow in her bosom that penetrated deeper and deeper, while her eyes, like lamps unfed with oil, shone with faint and wavering lustre. Mrs. Lewis, noticing with alarm her fading colour, insisted upon sending for a physician, but this Florence strenuously forbade. Mr. Alston advised the waters of the White Sulphur Springs in Virginia, but the season was too far advanced to remain long, and this too Florence resisted, from a vague hope that something would occur at home—she knew not what—to relieve her unspeakable misery. Delaval endeavoured to sustain her and himself too by the marble pillar of pride, which he grasped with cold and sliding hands; but though she pressed

her aching heart against it, it only mocked its throbbing anguish. Those only who have loved as deeply, passionately, and exclusively as Florence, can conceive of her unutterable desolation.

Letty, her negro attendant, watched her young mistress with sorrowful devotion. She was certain from the first there was treachery somewhere. She longed to discover it. That the unhappiness of Florence had its origin in the letter which had dropped from the pamphlet, and was written by Marcus, she was well aware. She was forbidden to mention the subject in terms she dared not disregard; but the determination to find out the mystery of the letter grew stronger every day. If she could only get to Mr. Patterson's! But, upon what plea could she ask leave of absence to visit a place with which she had never had any communication? Her mistress would suspect her motive, and it would be a sufficient reason for denial. At length circumstances favoured Letty's long-cherished wishes. There was a camp-meeting in the neighbourhood of Mr. Patterson's, which she expressed a strong desire to attend. Florence, who was an indulgent mistress, readily granted her request. She was even glad to be rid of the surveillance of the negro's shrewd, affectionate eye. She wanted to be alone in the solitude of her heart. She wanted no one near, not even her brother to say to her, by a glance of sympathy, "How lone, how dreary it is!" A hundred times she repeated to herself the thrilling, despairing strains of Scotia's sweetest bard:—

> "Had I a cave on some wild, distant shore,
> Where the winds howl to the waves' dashing roar,
> There would I weep my woes,
> There seek my lost repose,
> Till grief my eyes should close,
> Ne'er to wake more."

Letty departed in high spirits, in a covered wagon filled with negroes, bound, as they verily believed, for the promised land. The camp-meeting ground, in their estimation, was the flooring of heaven, and many of them expected to find there ready-

made wings, that would bear them up to the blue ceiling arching over them. They sang and shouted the whole way. Letty, with the improvisation of genius, went off into impromptus, which the less gifted ones repeated after her with increasing spirit:

I'm going to the promised land,
Just to find out what I can;
Old master Satan hide among the bushes,
I mean to catch 'em, and all de loaf and fishes.
Lip did dido, Letty know a heap,
Little pickaninny plague a folk asleep.

Letty was really an African *improvisatrice*, and on this occasion entitled herself to immortal laurels. Like the Egyptian priests, she veiled her true meaning in a kind of hieroglyphic style, but her songs all had one burden, whose weight was known only to herself:

Nigger shut a eye up,
See as well as ever;
Nigger pull a tongue out,
What of dat, I wonder.
White folk tell 'em one ting,
Nigger do anoder;
'Spose dey find out someting,
What of dat, I wonder.
Snake bake a hoe-cake, set a frog to mind it,
Letty come along—knock 'em all behind it.

Thus imparting inspiration to all, Letty went on her way rejoicing. The party were absent a week, and long after their return the night-shades of Wood Lawn were made vocal by these remembered strains.

Letty made ten times more grimaces than ever, and sometimes bit her tongue in a most portentous manner. Her odd, ugly countenance said as plain as words could speak it, "I knows what I knows, but I winna tell you."

In her brighter, merrier moments, Florence had made it a practice, after supper, to play on the piano some inspiring air, for Letty to dance, who was one of the most light, airy, graceful sylphs on the floor one could possibly imagine. A few evenings after her return, Letty came in with a white handkerchief pinned to her side, and begged her young mistress just for one tune. "She was obliged to dance," she said,

"she could not help it, and it did look so bad to shake the toes about without music."

Florence, with a languid smile, seated herself at the instrument, and Letty was soon floating, like a black feather, on the liquid sounds. There were always about a half dozen black heads peeping in at the door to witness the performance, for Letty, in consequence of her wit, *genius*, and grace, in spite of her ugly features, was the reigning belle of the plantation. She was compelled to stop in her airy performance by the ringing of the door-bell, whose summons she obeyed with alacrity.

"Master Alfred Patterson," said she, throwing the parlour door wide open, showing all the ivory of her mouth. "Please walk in."

Florence rose from the piano, suffused with burning blushes. The remembrance of the letter addressed to him covered her with shame, and plunged her in humiliation. Surprised at her emotion, the young man could not help indulging a hope, that, though once rejected, he was not altogether an object of indifference. The invitation, too, he had so unexpectedly received, to visit Wood Lawn, made this emotion still more flattering, more easy to translate in his favour. Delaval felt embarrassed, on his sister's account, but he was too much the master of himself not to welcome him with cordial politeness, and enter at once into familiar conversation.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," said he. "You have become so much of a bookworm lately, I feared we never should see you again."

"I could not refuse so polite an invitation," answered Patterson, "when it corresponded so well with my own wishes."

The countenance of Delaval expressed such manifest surprise, that Patterson involuntarily turned toward Letty, who was fidgeting near the door.

"The fact is, master," said Letty, giving one of her peculiar winks, "I see Master Patterson at the camp-ground, and I give him your 'spects, and Miss Florence's, too, and tell him you be glad to see him any time, but 'specially right off."

"She anticipated our wishes," said Delaval, with ready politeness. "The earliest time is always the best to welcome an old friend. Have you supped?"

"No," said Patterson, wondering at the audacity of the negro, who had given him a pressing invitation, as if it came directly from her master and mistress.

"Well, come into the dining-room, where I left my uncle and Mrs. Lewis discussing family matters, while my sister regaled us with a little music."

Delaval led their guest to the dining-room, while Florence turned to rebuke Letty for her unauthorized boldness. She had disappeared, and the bell again ringing, announced a visitor. She was now alone in the parlour, still seated at the piano, over whose keys her fingers were lightly and unconsciously running. There was something in the tread of the person who crossed the threshold that made her start up and turn her face toward the door. It was Marcus Warland, standing a few paces within, whose glance met hers, not cold and haughty, as when she had seen him the last time, but beaming with intense emotion. His face was very pale, and he wore on his arm the sable badge of mourning. Florence gazed like one awaking from a dream, then clasping her hand with an expression of rapture, was about to spring forward, when suddenly something seemed to arrest her, and freeze her to the spot where she stood. If one could imagine fire suddenly congealing, it would convey the impression of the transition of that moment.

"Florence," cried he, advancing, "L'éclair, in the name of heaven, tell me what I have done to estrange the heart I once thought wholly mine. If love is extinguished, justice and truth must still remain. In their sacred names I demand to know my crime, that I may justify my character, or if I have a secret enemy, as I well believe I have, avenge my wrongs."

Florence looked upon him with an astonished glance How could the man who had written such words of her assume this lofty tone and indignant air? *He* seemed the *injured*, instead of the *injurer;* the *victim*, instead of the *sacrificer*.

"Mr. Warland has no worse enemy than himself," replied Florence, with inexpressible dignity. "His own words have condemned him, his own hand signed the death-warrant of my love."

"By heaven, Florence! I begin to fear that we are all going mad! I cannot be put off with these dark and enigmatical sayings. After all that has passed between us, I have a right to openness and sincerity. Oh, L'éclair!—Oh, Rosa! by the memory of your unparalleled devotion, by those celestial ministrations which brought me back to life, and which my whole life can never repay, I implore you not to trifle with my happiness, and thereby destroy your own."

This allusion to her disguise, and the cares she had lavished on him in his sick room, again sent the haughty blood to her cheeks. It was the crimson of shame blended with the deeper hue of pride and anger. The words seemed literally to sting her.

"That you should allude, at this moment, to an act of infatuation, that I now mourn in dust and ashes," cried she, almost choked with contending passions, "is a crowning insult, which I never can pardon. Go, sir," she continued, terror contracting her brow, and quivering on her lip; "go, sir, before my brother comes. I know not what he will do if he sees you here. Will you not go, or do you wish to drive me really mad?"

"Yes, I will go, never again to expose myself to wrongs which, being inflicted by a woman, I can never redress. But your brother and I must meet, and from him I will learn what you refuse to reveal. He shall give me the name of my enemy, if he has to write it in my heart's blood."

"Once again I repeat," she cried, "you have no enemy but Marcus Warland. You need no traducer. You have had none. It is mockery to ask an explanation; worse than mockery."

Marcus looked upon her steadfastly one moment. In that moment her image, as he had seen it at different periods of

their intercourse, passed rapidly before him, like the phantasma of a dream. The childlike, bewitching fairy of the fountain, the incarnate Lightning that gilded the hall of the university, the playful, gentle, fascinating mistress of that lordly mansion, the inspired sibyl of the library, the loving, impassioned companion of the moonlight hour,—and last of all, the tender, humble, artless nurse. What a beautiful picture gallery it made! And there she stood, so changed, so near, and yet appearing so far off. She seemed to have altered the very style of her dress, so as to destroy the identity of the Florence of other days. Her hair, instead of falling in wild, luxuriant wreaths around her person, was gathered up behind, and fastened with a silver comb, at the sides of which the ringlets dropped, as if ready to fall from their own abundance. The features had a marble rigidity of outline, in lieu of their former bewitching softness. The lovely, radiant Creole was transformed to a cold Grecian statue. It was a Galatea before Pygmalion had warmed her with the divine breath of love.

Marcus felt his heart swell almost to bursting. He had been under the spell of an enchantress, who could sport at will with the passions of man. With a mighty effort he would break this spell, and free himself from her power. He approached the door, and placed his foot upon the threshold.

"I came," said he, "from the grave of my father, who bade me bear to you his parting blessing—a blessing hallowed by the solemnities of death and the prospect of eternity. I go now from the grave of my buried love, bearing with me a lesson more awful than that his dying accents taught me. *They* breathed of hope and immortality. There is more of death around me now than I saw in his shrouded form."

He turned and passed hastily through the hall, when Letty flying out through a side-door, arrested his steps.

"Stop, Master Marcus; you mustn't go," cried the negro girl, making vehement gestures. "You don't know what I knows. It'll all be 'clared up. Jist wait a minnit. Master

Patterson himself is here. The Lord sent you, sure enough, this very night."

"Let me pass," cried Marcus, in a more haughty tone than he had ever addressed to a negro before. "I cannot, will not be detained."

"Master Marcus mustn't go till he hear something," said Letty, jumping into the doorway and putting her arms across as a barrier. "He be sorry all his life-long if he no mind what this nigger say. Miss Florence been 'ceived, that she has. She been most raving 'stracted 'bout it. Takes Letty to find out where old Satan hide his nose. Come along back, Master Marcus."

The eloquence of Letty had attracted the attention of Delaval, who was passing from the dining-room to the parlour, in company with Patterson. Seeing a gentleman in black, whose egress Letty seemed resolutely resisting, he came forward, wondering what it could mean. The eyes of these two estranged young men met in the twilight rays of the shaded lamp that hung above the staircase. They burned upon each other with mutual scorn and ire.

"I came," said Marcus, placing his back against the door-post, and folding his arms across his breast, "to demand an explanation of the reiterated insults I have received. My letters are returned unopened. I am commanded to leave the presence of the sister, lest the brother should wreak his vengeance upon me; and I call upon the Almighty God that made me, to bear witness that I have never injured you or her, in thought, word, or action. Who talks of injury? Mine is the injury, deep as life itself. In friendship, as in love, I have only too blindly trusted, been too fatally deceived."

Marcus raised his voice with the energy of passion. Delaval was about to reply, when Letty, stepping between them, cried out: "Master George, oh! Master George, please come into the parlour, and you too, Master Marcus, where Miss Florence and Master Patterson is, and I'll 'clare it all up, jist like moon-

shine. I got Master Patterson here o' purpose, 'cause I know white folks don't believe all a nigger say. Master Marcus haint done nothing wrong, nohow. I never think he did. I find out who Belzebub be."

"There may be something in this," said Delaval, who had been excessively struck by the tones and looks of Marcus, so expressive of outraged innocence. "Warland, will you come? Vindicate yourself from this aspersion, if you can, and relieve me of a burden that has wellnigh crushed me to the earth."

Marcus bowed his head, and walked in silent dignity, side by side with Delaval into the room from which he had just been banished. Delaval motioned to a chair, but Marcus refused the offered courtesy.

"I never again sit down under your roof," said he, in a calm voice, "till I am requested to do it *as* a friend, and *by* a friend."

Florence was seated on a sofa, in a state of passive agony, between her uncle and Mr. Patterson. The latter rose and greeted Marcus with great cordiality. Letty had followed the young gentlemen into the parlour, with a face of unutterable meanings.

"And now," said Delaval in a commanding tone to the negro, "tell me *what* you know, and *all* you know."

"Before I begins," said Letty, folding her hands with serene importance, "I must ask Miss Florence to please be so kind as to 'xibit the letter she drop out of the book on dis here floor."

"Letty," cried Florence, starting on her feet, "have I not forbidden you"——

"Sister," said Delaval, "I entreat you to let her have her way. Permit the letter to be exhibited, as Letty says, that Mr. Warland may not assert we gave him no opportunity of vindication."

While Florence with evident reluctance left the room, Mr. Alston rose, and waving his hand with his accustomed dignity, exclaimed: "This seems to me a very extraordinary proceed-

ing, for a young lady of Miss Delaval's station to obey the bidding of a slave, and to be called upon to display her private papers in this promiscuous company. I must say I disapprove of this transaction, and protest against the interference of this very officious negro."

"Uncle, I beg of you to let things have their course. They have gone too far to recede. I have invited this young gentleman to return, and by the shade of Cicero he shall have a hearing."

Florence entered at this moment, and advancing to Patterson, with haughty grace gave the letter into his hands.

"This is your property, sir, I believe," she said. "It was left by accident in the leaves of a pamphlet which you had the politeness to send me. Can it be a matter of surprise to you that the writer of that letter should find himself here, an unwelcome and unhonoured guest?"

"Why, this is a letter from Mr. Warland!" said Patterson, looking at it with surprise. "I know not how it came in that pamphlet; but surely he never wrote any thing to me which could give offence to you, or any human being."

"Just please look inside of the 'velope," said Letty, "and see if that be the right one. Heap of fine coats put on over de rags and tatters."

Marcus stood in dignified silence, with that proud curl of the lip which gave inexpressible beauty to the passion of scorn. He saw Patterson glance his eye carelessly over the contents of the letter.

"Yes, I recollect this very well," cried the latter; "a business letter, which can interest no one but the parties concerned. But what is this? A postscript? twice the length of the letter, too! I never saw this before. Strange—unaccountable!"

He read on, and as he read, perplexity and indignation were visible on his knitting brows and in his kindling eyes.

"This is foul, iniquitous." he exclaimed. "Warland never

wrote a line of this postscript, never. How it came here the power of darkness only knows."

"That me," cried Letty. "I knows how it came there, I 'spect."

"Allow me to see what they have done me the honour to attribute to me," cried Marcus, advancing and taking the letter from the hand of Patterson.

"Oh, Marcus!" exclaimed Florence, springing forward and endeavouring to snatch the paper with her trembling fingers, "read not, I pray you, those shameful words. You never, never will forgive me for having believed, for one moment, that you could have been the author. Marcus—in pity for my shame, in pity for my penitence, my deep humiliation, refrain from the perusal of those disgraceful lines."

Clinging to his arm with impassioned and appealing looks, in which joy, ecstasy, and self-reproach were struggling for mastery, Florence sought to gain possession of the vile forgery, that had caused her so much misery. Delaval had hold of his other hand, squeezing it with the old *tourniquet* gripe.

"Warland," said he in a husky voice, "I wish you would take a pistol and shoot me through the head. I am sure I deserve it, and ten times more, for being the dupe of such villany. Forgive me, Warland, if you can. God knows you have not suffered alone."

"I *must* know my alleged crime," answered Marcus, returning the warm grasp of Delaval's hand, and gently releasing the letter from the agitated fingers of Florence. "Let there be no more concealments, no more mystery. For your sakes as well as mine, oppose me not, I pray you. Your vindication, I doubt not, is contained in this letter."

The letter it is unnecessary to transcribe, for, as Patterson remarked, "the contents were interesting only to the parties concerned;" but the postscript, so mysteriously added, in a handwriting so exactly resembling that of Marcus it could not be told from the original, we will insert, that Florence and

Delaval may be vindicated in the hearts of others for their injustice to Marcus. It was this:

"What I am now about to say is in perfect confidence. I know you will never betray the trust of a friend, especially when another is concerned, in whom I know you have a deep interest. That you are a lover of the heiress of Wood Lawn, is no secret to the world. That I have been so fortunate as to be honoured with her favour, is a fact perhaps more notorious. My motive in introducing the subject to you is disinterested, and I think you will appreciate it. I fear *you* have been rejected for my sake. As in these days young men mostly marry for money, I presume the worldly advantages of the match have not been overlooked by you. I add this, to say to you in the unreserve of perfect friendship, that I am willing to withdraw all claims to a priority in her regard. Perhaps there is not another young man in the world who would be affected as I have been by the proof she has lately given of her devotion to me. *You* know, everybody must know by this time, that she followed me, disguised as a mulatto, and stayed with me during that sickness occasioned by the wound inflicted by the rascal Pellam. I ought to feel grateful and exceedingly flattered by such an unheard-of act of affection; but I acknowledge that I am so fastidious, it has filled me with the deepest disgust. It has annihilated every particle of the love I once felt. Indeed, so great is my present repugnance, that even the prospect of possessing her splendid fortune cannot reconcile me to the thought of a union. Now, if it is the fortune you desire rather than the girl, all this will make no difference with you. Should you be disposed to resume your addresses, you may release me from a very disagreeable scrape. That fiery brother of hers may get me into difficulty. I do not wish to fight him, as I really like him. This is all *sub rosa*. Let me know your intentions very soon."

It would be difficult to describe the feelings of Marcus while perusing this shameful forgery. That Florence should

have been deceived by the handwriting he could not wonder, for it was the exact counterpart of his own; that, being deceived, she should feel insulted, wounded, and outraged, as never woman was before, he could not wonder. His greatest wonder was, that Delaval had not shot or stabbed him, in the first storm of his anger. Crushing the vile paper in his hands, he looked at Florence, who was no longer the cold, rigid statue, but the Galatea, warmed by the divine breath of love. Their hearts rushed to each other in that lightning glance, and their hands, involuntarily extended, sealed by their pressure the reconciliation that glance expressed. The words that came to their lips were too sacred to be uttered in the presence of others. They did not, could not speak. Neither did Delaval, who again grasped the hand of Marcus, and, throwing his arm over his shoulder, drew him closely to his side.

In the burst of emotion that followed the perusal of the letter, Letty's agency and promised explanation were momentarily overlooked. She waited impatiently for the subsiding of their full and passionate feelings, then twirling her fingers, and coughing elaborately, she recalled their attention to herself.

"Do you really know, my clever darkie," asked Patterson, "who wrote that abominable thing? If you *can* enlighten us on this subject, you shall have more money in your purse than you can spend between now and Christmas. Speak and tell us all about it."

"Well, master, you must let me have my own way," answered Letty, speaking with consequential deliberation, "and I'll tell you what I knows, and clarify the whole subject. I seen a long time how every thing going wrong. Ever since Miss Florence drop that are letter and pick it up, she no had no peace, no satisfaction of her life. She told me never mention Master Marcus' name, long as I live, and I knowed that wa'n't nateral. So I thinks and thinks, and does nothing but think, how to bring matters right, when I heern of the camp-meeting, and

sot off. Then I made bold to go to Master Patterson's. I got 'quainted with Creasy, one of his house-women, at the camp-ground. She got religion there, and she so happy; she love everybody and every thing, and me too. She invited me go home with her, and that what jist what I wanted. I made myself agreeable o' purpose. Well, when I gets to Master Patterson's, and I feels sorter at home, and talks kinder familiar like, I asked who visited her master, and if she 'membered who was there when he sent a bundle of papers to my young mistress. Says Creasy, says she, 'Nobody here that time, 'less it was Master Pellam. Yes, Master Pellam was here, one, two, three day then.'"

"Pellam!" repeated her auditors, looking at each other. Florence turned a remorseful look toward her uncle. She had been suspecting—she could not help it—*his* immaculate *irreproachability*.

"Another wound in the back!" said Marcus, involuntarily, "another coward thrust!"

"Well, as soon as she tell me this," resumed Letty, animated by the impression she had made, "I questions and questions her, all in a roundabout way, just like a Christian for all, and this is what I finds out. One morning, when Master Patterson gone to the plantation, she see Master Pellam in the next room. Upper part of the door all of glass, so she see him good as could be. He never 'spected Creasy close by. She mighty quiet body, you know; keep still as a mouse, think a heap tho'. Well, she 'member seeing him take up a letter off the secrerary, pull it out of the 'velope, and sorter ponder over it. Then set down and write away on the same paper a long time. She 'member too how he keep looking over one shoulder and then t'other, as tho' somebody right there. S'pose he thought ole Satan 'hind him. So he be, sure enough. Then he put it in the kiver, and stick it in a little book, and clap some newspapers on top on't, and made up a sorter of a bundle She never thought of no harm, Creasy didn't, but she mighty

obsarving person, and got a powerful strong memory. 'Sides, Creasy she say she 'members seeing Master Pellam giving the bundle to her master, and ask him to send it to Miss Florence, 'cause she like to read the news."

"This is true," said Patterson. "I remember his staying at home that morning, on the plea of having letters to write, and I unlocked my secretary for his use. I had read him Warland's letter the night before—at least a portion of it."

"The packet came in your name," said Florence. "Had Pellam's been mentioned, I might have suspected something treacherous. Yet, even then, blind and wilful girl that I am, I fear I would have been guilty of the injustice and wrong that through life I shall vainly rue."

Marcus bent down, and said something to her in a low voice, that brought a rich glow to her cheeks and a smile to her lips, but no one else heard the words he uttered.

"I told the servant that it was sent by Pellam, but I suppose he forgot or neglected the message," said Patterson. "I was not aware that he possessed this wonderful talent of imitation. But what motive could have prompted an act of such cold-blooded malice? Have you ever injured or thwarted him, Warland?"

"I have been so unfortunate as to cross his path," answered Marcus, looking unconsciously toward Florence, "and I cannot wonder that he does not look upon me as a friend. He has sought to injure me more than once, and the weapons have been turned against his own breast. One never forgives the man whom they have wronged. This is the secret of Pellam's deadly malice. He has more mind than I have given him credit for, and, like yourself, I was ignorant of his peculiar talent for forgery."

"I was aware that he excelled in penmanship," said Mr. Aiston, who had been watching for a favourable opening for a speech. "He was distinguished for this when a boy, and amused nimself by imitating the handwriting of others. Had

my nephew and niece confided to me the very unpleasant circumstances which have come to my knowledge this evening, I think I could have explained them in a satisfactory manner. I regret that I ever encouraged the visits of this exceedingly unworthy young gentleman. I considered him quite irreproachable, but the wisest may err in their judgment of men. I regret too that I allowed him to prejudice me against a very estimable young man, Mr. Warland," added he, walking majestically forward, and extending his aristocratic hand with an air of dignified self-approbation, "I make you welcome at this time and hereafter to Wood Lawn, and I trust all unpleasant remembrances will be buried in oblivion."

"But, Letty," cried Florence, while Marcus was receiving with due respect the ostentatious but sincere *amende honorable* of her stately uncle, "I fear you have betrayed my trust. How could Pellam have discovered the secret of my disguise?"

"I knows that too, Miss Florence," replied the all-divining Letty, "and I'll tell you all 'bout it. When we were in that strange place where Master Marcus lay sick, you 'member one night how you took off your fixings just to let his father see how pretty you be. Well, that night arter you come back, in your room you sat down near the window, and I looked out t'other one. Says you, 'I hate to put this ugly stuff on my face any more, but I must. That dear, good man, how he seemed to love me, and how I love him too! Here, Letty, *mulattofy* me again.' Then I fixes you up just as you was afore, and you went out, and you says, 'I wonder if he will know me now.' Then I noticed that the curtain was a leetle one side, and I looked out a sudden and sees a man looking right into the window, and the moment I sot eyes on him, I knew it was Master Pellam, I did. I never let on a word 'bout it, 'cause I know 'twould scare Miss Florence. Soon as he see me, he dart off like ole snake, nobody know where. I scared almost to death for fear he tell on Miss Florence. But he go off, say nothing, do nothing. I thought he all this time in Texas.

I wish he where he ought to be, and all his kin folk, that I do."

"Wherever he may be," exclaimed Marcus, "retribution shall follow him."

"Amen!" uttered Delaval.

"Oh! he is not worthy of your resentment," cried Florence. "Surely, Marcus, surely, brother, you would not condescend to wreak your vengeance on one so far beneath your contempt. The man who could inflict the dastard stroke from which you have so lately recovered, Marcus, should be left to the"——

"Hangman's hands," interrupted Delaval. "She is right; she always is—that is, sometimes."

"I saw a gentleman a few days since," remarked Mr. Alston, "who met young Pellam on the confines of Texas. From his account, I should think my niece was correct when she observed that he was unworthy the resentment of an honourable man. He was completely inebriated, and is said to be habitually subject to fits of intoxication. I would advise every self-respecting young gentleman to leave him to the degradation he has brought upon himself."

"Yes," said Florence, "uncle is wise and just in his counsels. Let us leave him to his own evil heart and baffled passions. Let us forget his very name. But how shall we reward our second, or, rather, third Daniel—our modern Portia, who has unravelled this web of deceit, and shown a faith in the honour of our friend that shames our distrust and injustice? Letty, what can I do for you? You saved my life when a child. You have restored to me a far richer boon than life. Tell me how I can prove my gratitude."

"By just saying nothing at all, Miss Florence," said the modern Portia. "I loves you a heap better than I does myself, and I couldn't be happy, nohow, when I see you the object of secret mellacly. Every night when you think Letty fast asleep, she watch you all shining in the moonlight,

like a suffocating angel as you was, and she feel a'most willing to die, if young mistress only smile as she used to long time ago."

Florence laid her beautiful hand on Letty's jetty fingers, tears trembled in her brilliant eyes, her bosom heaved beneath its veiling lace.

"Your own heart will reward you, Letty," said she, "and mine will bless you."

"Letty, you are a noble girl," cried Delaval, with enthusiasm. "You deserve to be canonized. I will have a statue erected to you, and you shall be worshipped as the presiding genius of distressed lovers, through all coming time."

"You make fun of Letty, Master George, but no matter. It does me a power of good to see you like yourself again. I don't want nothing to do with cannons, though; I've no use for them."

"You are a kind, excellent, and noble-hearted creature," said Marcus, grasping her hand with cordial gratitude. "As I am the most of all obliged, I ought the most abundantly to reward."

"This nigger nothing but a fool, for all she try to make out herself be so smart," cried Letty, with an immense smile, "but I'll tell you what I do want, Master Marcus, if you please; I want to see you and Miss Florence make up; that what I want."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Delaval, laughing, and clapping his hands. "Bravo, Letty. Verily thou shalt have thy reward. Come, sister, let us all have the felicity of seeing you make up with Warland, as Letty means, that is, in the good old-fashioned *kiss-and-be-friends* sort of way."

Florence, over whose face ten thousand blushing shadows were rolling, escaped from the room. Marcus, who knew by intuition that she had gone to the library, soon followed. There he indeed found her, in her favourite window-seat, partly shaded by the well-remembered crimson curtain. She was

weeping, but her tears were not the night-dew of sorrow; they were the drops of the morning, that turn to diamonds in the sun.

"Oh, how much have I to *make up* to you," she cried, as she shed those blissful tears on the bosom she had thought for ever estranged. "Why did I not believe from the first that it was a vile forgery? Ah! it was a self-condemning conscience that made me a coward and a dupe. I feel now, Marcus, that I deserved to fall in your estimation, for allowing my love to triumph over the suggestions of prudence and the counsels of resisting friends. Mrs. Lewis, to whom I confided my plans, besought, with earnest tears, to turn me from my wild purpose, but in vain. My brother was absent. I heard you were dying. The omnipotence of love removed every obstacle. But, oh! I have been very rash, and, I fear now, very unwomanly."

"And can you think me such a cold, selfish ingrate?" exclaimed Marcus. "Yes, you have been rash; for what is self-forgetfulness, self-immolation, but rashness? You have been unwomanly, only to be angelic. Florence, I have admired your beauty, grace, and talents more than words of mine have ever told, for my esteem has always checked my admiration. I have worshipped you as L'éclair, adored you as Florence, but I love you most of all as the gentle Rosa. Oh! be ever the Rosa of my heart's home. Come to me with her downy touch and snowflake step, and even the same twilight hue, if you will, and if the world condemn you for a love so far transcending the merits that inspired it, let my lips breathe the verdict for your crime, and imprisonment in my arms be the only penalty which you are doomed to suffer."

"I see you have *made up*," said Delaval, when, some time after, he entered the library, for pen, ink, and paper; his fine black eyes bright with all their wonted fire. "But you have not allowed poor Letty the only boon she asked. Any message to Miss Katy, Warland?" added he, as he was leaving the room.

"Don't go, brother," cried Florence; "there is the table

where you always write, and here are eyes that love to look upon you. George, we ought to be called, hereafter, the Children of the Mist."

"I feel very much like a son of the morning now," said Delaval, seating himself before the writing materials. "That was an unhappy allusion, however. You know who was called the son of the morning, and how low he fell. Warland, my dear fellow, my glorious fellow," he exclaimed, springing up, and seizing his hands in both his, "if you knew how happy I am, you would not look so intolerably wretched yourself. Seriously, I feel such a specific lightness of spirit, I fear I shall go up in a natural balloon."

"One question," said Florence, turning to Marcus, "I have forgotten to ask. How did you learn the identity of the humble Rosa and the proud Florence?"

A shadow came over the sunny brow of Marcus. The solemn scene of his father's death-bed rose up before him, and chastened the rapture of reconciliation.

"My father, Florence," he answered, "with his dying lips revealed the secret, that I might be convinced of the depth and tenderness of the heart whose truth and constancy I was forced to doubt. He justified you with his last, fading breath, while he told me of the boundless debt my life's devotion never can repay."

That was a *glorious evening* at Wood Lawn, as Delaval said more than once. The gay laugh of Florence was heard in silvery music once more in her dwelling. Her magnificent voice again accompanied the keys of her neglected instrument. The flowers that had seemed scentless and dim blushed into new bloom and sweetness. Every thing had the brightness and beauty of a new creation, for paradise was regained in the heart. If Letty was a belle before, there was no limit to her belleship from this period. The gratitude of those whom her shrewd and active spirit had restored to happiness did not evaporate in a few words of promise. They vied with each other in the

number and value of their gifts, till Letty said her trunk was "nothing but a show-box, sure enough." Her fame went abroad, and negroes came from distant plantations, when their holidays allowed them, to see the wisdom of Letty, and they went away, thinking, as Queen Sheba did of the splendidly endowed son of David, that the half was left untold. She improvised one or two more verses of her camp-meeting song, which she sang while dusting the parlour, and Marcus and Florence sat in the piazza, within reach of her musical voice.

"Let alone dis nigger,
What you want of Letty?
Sweetheart come to see her now—
Maybe think she pretty.
Cattle in the corn-patch,
Possum with the gander,
Rabbit in the turnip-bed,
What of dat, I wonder?
Fox he make a chicken-pie, 'vite a possum to it,
Letty eat it 'fore he come—dat a way to do it."

A merry burst of laughter from the window made Letty turn her head quickly, and suspend her dusting, as well as her music. Delaval threw a handful of silver on the carpet.

"Sing another verse," said he, "and let it be about the quarrel and the making up."

Letty began immediately, picking up the silver, and jingling it like castanets, and making faces that it would be no sin to worship, for there was nothing like them on the earth or in the waters under the earth:

"Pretty master come along,
Dead in love as could be;
Mistress say, 'You get along—
I know who a you be.'
Pretty master mad as fire,
Little mistress huffy,
Letty catch him by the arm,
Turn him in a jiffy.
When he make the white plum-cake, let 'em 'vite a possum,
Maybe he no appetite—dat a way to dose 'em."

This is the last specimen we shall give of the inspirations of our African Corinna. The sudden and sunflower expansion of her genius, under the beams of favouring circumstances, was

truly surprising, for, though she saw no necessity of linking two ideas together to make *reason*, she certainly had a perception of measure and *rhyme*.

And now the sky is all blue, and the current smooth, and the gales propitious, we feel as if we ought to lay down our pen. Indeed, the sunshine is too bright—it is dazzling. Where is the artist who ever attempted to paint a noonday sun?

Kind and gentle reader, (for to us you have always been kind and gentle, whatever name you bear,) we trust you have followed with interest the history of our friends, especially that humbler class, whose characters form the under-current of the work. But, as we said at the beginning, we have a higher motive than merely to excite interest for the passing hour. It is to cast our mite into the great treasury of truth; and if that mite be no larger than the smallest particle which the coral insect leaves in forming the growing reef, it may assist in erecting a barrier against the ocean-waves of ruin that threaten to lay waste our land. This may end in presumption, but it began in humility. The greatness of the design should never be judged by the means which are sometimes used to assist in its accomplishment. In a frail bark of osiers was the future lawgiver of Israel committed to the waters of the Nile, with naught but the arm of God to defend him from the deadly warriors of the deep. Like the sister who stood waiting in the shadow of the palm-trees, watching the destiny of the wave-cradled child, till the daughter of Pharaoh came near and took him in her adopting arms, we wait the royal coming of public favour, the sweeping of its purple robes, the glittering of its golden crown.

After the usual time consecrated to the memory of the dead, there was a splendid wedding at Hickory Hill, not destined to so disastrous a termination as the ill-starred Cora's. It is an astonishing fact, that Aunt Milly survived the elation and excitement of the occasion. To see Miss Katy, the child of her

hopes and prayers, the mistress of such a noble establishment, to say nothing of her princely spirited husband, was the crown of her earthly ambition. As the still lovely and charming Mrs. Bellamy looked on the sweet young bride, whom she loved with all a mother's tenderness, and thought of the night when she first saw her, a poor and isolated little child, she blessed God, who put it into her heart to love and cherish her, and nurture her into the bloom and the beauty of womanhood.

It was a moment to be remembered, when Aunt Milly bade adieu to Bellamy Place, and, rolling in a carriage behind her young mistress, followed her to her new home. She kept nodding her head to the negroes, as long as she could catch a glimpse of the hickory trees, smiles and tears contending on her honest countenance. The habit of exaggeration she had acquired at the ferryman's cabin had long since died in the plenitude and luxury in which she had been living. But it was owing to the purifying influence of religion, which opened her eyes to the beauty of truth, and convinced her that even affection, pure as hers, could not sanctify the white little lies she formerly thought it no sin to utter.

Hannibal could not bid Katy good-by. He gave her a parting serenade with his beloved violin, but hid himself when the hour of separation arrived. Delaval endeavoured to persuade him that Letty was worthy to supplant the lost Cora in his affections; but the Carthaginian General never suffered his constancy to the memory of the beautiful mulatto to vary one hair's-breadth. He felt with O'Connor's Child,

> "Oh, what is any living love,
> To that which cannot quit the dead?"

The same wedding-party soon after gathered at Wood Lawn, to grace the nuptials of its beautiful mistress. And they came also from the north and the south, and the east and the west, for the invitations were sent far and wide. It was a joyous and magnificent festival, as well it might be, for such a bride-

groom and such a bride seldom are found among every-day mortals. It was equivalent to a double wedding, for the young master and his fair-cheeked bride divided with the splendid pair the hymeneal honours.

Good Mrs. Lewis has not acted a prominent part in this narrative, but she immortalized herself by the wedding-supper and all the accompaniments of the festival. It has been said that the ladies of the South excel in the adornments of a bridal fête, and it is certain that they are unsurpassed in the elegance of their floral taste. This floral taste is never so gracefully exercised as in the decorations of a bridal table. That which was now spread in the ample hall of Wood Lawn, resembled a garden of snow glittering in the moonlight, for flowers in bas-relief on a surface of dazzling white decorated the lofty pyramids of cake, and sprinkled over this surface of spotless white gleamed ten thousand rays of silver and gold. Real, living, blooming, aromatic flowers exhaled their perfume from rich silver vases, the whole length and breadth of the table, and were festooned in garlands all around the wall. Over each end of the table was suspended a canopy of flowers, in honour of each bridal pair. Nothing could be more graceful or beautiful than these novel decorations. They were formed of several graduated hoops, entwined with evergreen and flowers, and the cords that confined them together, at regular intervals, were wreathed with the same glowing blossoms. As these sweet, fairy pavilions, softly, gently swaying in the night-breeze, rose in floral beauty above the brides of the evening, they might have been taken for two May Queens, in their coronation bowers.

Aunt Milly and Letty were peeping in at the window, in the midst of many a smiling black face.

"I do say," cried Letty, who looked something like a bride herself, so handsome and tasteful was her attire, "that Miss Florence and Master Marcus are the gloriousest couple that ever was created, and the way they do love each other—oh!

you get along, you Letty, you can't begin to speak about it! Just see her look up at him with them eyes of hers. Now, who ever did see a pair of eyes that could hold a candle to 'em?"

"Miss Katy's can," said Aunt Milly, her family pride and affection kindling as she spoke. "See, she's a looking sorter down, so modest and tender, and then she's so fair and white you can hardly tell which is which, her cheek or the veil. Bless her little heart, I can see it flutter about now. She couldn't speak a cross word to save her life. She's like the blessed virgins that kept their hair trimmed and burning, waiting for the bridegroom to come along."

"She mighty pretty, but Miss Florence beat her all hollow," persisted Letty. "*She* look spunky, that what I like to see; but she gentle as a lamb for all that."

They probably continued for a long time discussing the beauties and merits of the two young brides, but the music of the band that came rolling out of the dancing hall drowned their voices in a flood of sound. The floor of the room where the dancers repaired was covered with most exquisite figures, designed in chalk, soon to be effaced by the light-winged feet that skimmed over them. The whole lawn was illuminated with lamps, the back-yard blazing with pine-torches, and green boughs were hanging in front of every negro cabin. Many an airy couple was seen waltzing on the smooth, green lawn, and the way the negroes leaped and danced about the back-yard was, as Letty said, "a caution." There can be no such weddings as those celebrated on the noble plantations of the South, for nowhere else do we see the bright, jetty setting, that surrounds the fair pearls and diamonds, it so beautifully contrasts.

Mr. Alston made a characteristic speech on the occasion, accompanied by an extra set of flourishes, and Delaval, just at the close of the evening, summoned Letty into the hall, and told her that she must wind up with an epithalamium and a *pas seul*. It is true he was obliged to explain the nature of the request, but she acquitted herself in her twofold character

to the astonishment and admiration of all, and disappeared in a shower of silver, that fell from an invisible cloud.

We thought we had bidden a last farewell to the beautiful fountain we love so well. We did not know that Florence would insist upon her husband's taking her to the scene of his early struggles and his father's latest rest. But she did, and before he transplanted this true passion-flower to the bower he had made, he carried her to the lone spot we have so often visited. He took her into the cabin, where his old friend, the ferryman's wife, still presided, and who greeted them with heartfelt cordiality. But the walls were no longer dark and gloomy. A pure surface of white plaster greeted the eye, and the furniture and curtains presented quite a modern appearance. The mistress, too, of the rejuvenated mansion harmonized in her neat apparel with the improved and beautified aspect of the place. The visits of Marcus to the home of his childhood had awakened in her heart the love of the beautiful, and his liberality had enabled her to fit up the old cabin, and convert it into a pleasant and comfortable dwelling-place. To the hand that had transplanted the wild rose to the grave of Simon, and that watered the flower that blossomed on his father's grassy bed, he could assign no niggard boon.

Marcus led Florence to the Long Moss Spring, and seated her on the snowy rock so often his throne, and he watched the shadow of the magnolia and the shining holly playing on her brow. They drank together of the waters, purer than Castalian dews, and looked upon each other's faces in the blue mirror beneath. Then, hand in hand, they knelt by the grave of Warland, and mingled their sighs with the wind that whispered mournfully with the rustling grass. They bent over the spot where the aged Simon slept, and plucked some of the roses that blossomed luxuriantly there. Mr. Bellamy had ordered a marble tomb to the memory of his friend, but it was not yet completed. Marcus was glad that Florence could see

the spot just as God had made it, with no influence but that of nature's breathing into her soul.

"Oh," exclaimed Florence, as he drew her reluctant steps from the fountain's side, "let us build a cottage on this enchanting spot, and come and dwell in this sweet and lonely paradise.

"Would this be world enough for thee?"

"No, my gentle Rosa," answered Marcus, the lofty glance of ambition flashing from his eyes, and mingling with the softer radiance of love, "dearly as I love you, and though I could be happy, blessed with you, were Providence to cast me on Crusoe's desert isle, I should not be true to my destiny if I *voluntarily* buried in solitude the talents God has given me to glorify him in a more extended sphere. Neither would my bright and high-souled L'éclair. She was formed to gladden and beautify the world, as well as to be the angel of my Eden home. But we *will* have a cottage here, where we can sometimes come and bathe our spirits in the heavenly beauty of the scene. This shall be a resting-place to refresh us through the journey of life; and, oh! Florence, when that pilgrimage is over, may we sleep side by side, with our buried father, near the margin of the Long Moss Spring."

Florence turned aside her head, to hide the tears that gathered in her eyes. Her heart was too full of love and happiness, not to be chilled by the cold thought of mortality. Marcus put his arm around her, and gently drew her to the river's shore, where the old ferryboat lay, dark and lazy, like some old negro basking in the sun. The ferryman's wife stood gazing at them from the door of the cabin. Marcus beckoned to her, pointing to the poles, and she came with a quick step and smiling countenance.

"Will you help me once again?" he asked, unfastening the chain, and lifting Florence lightly into the boat. "I must ferry her across this river of many memories."

"Yes, that I will, and thank you, too," answered the woman,

and Florence found herself floating on the dark-flowing Chattahoochee, while Marcus dashed the pole into the current with all the wild grace of boyhood, combined with manhood's strength.

The sun went behind a cloud, and he hung his hat on the lantern-post, so that the river breeze rustled freely through his magnificent locks. Florence gazed on his splendid figure, in the attitude of unconscious grace it had assumed, with eyes of adoration; then, moved by a sudden impulse, she stooped over the edge of the boat, and dipping the water in her hand, sprinkled it laughingly over his waving hair.

"Ah, fairy of the fountain," he exclaimed, "that was a never-to-be-forgotten baptism; and this I receive as a new consecration. Beautiful, life-giving element, I welcome the purifying drops. Florence, the sweetest, dearest associations of my life cluster around the welling spring. Thanks be to God for the fountain's gush and the river's flow."

Sweet in after-life was the remembrance of this scene. Marcus has not yet reached the zenith of his fame, but like the ascending sun, it shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. His voice will soon be heard in our country's capitol, with an eloquence powerful enough to waken its deepest echoes. His motto is *Excelsior*. His goal the highest summit of human ambition; that is, the glory of God, and the good of man.

And whether as the glowing lightning playing lambently on the horizon of his existence, or as the waxing moon shining with increasing lustre on the rising tide of his affections, or as the gentle rose shedding sweetness and beauty on his heart, Florence is still the angel of his Eden home.

THE END.

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